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Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

THE NERBUDDA IN FLOOD BELOW MANDLA TOWN.

CENTRAL PROVINCES DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.

MANDLA DISTRICT.

VOLUME A.

DESCRIPTIVE

BY F. R. R. RUDMAN, I.C.S.

BOMBAY:
PRINTED AT THE TIMES PRESS.

1912.

PREFATORY NOTE.

I am indebted to Mr. H. F. E. Bell, who was Settlement Officer in Mandla from 1904 to 1910, for the whole of the first chapter and for the description of the Gond, Baiga and Dhoba castes in Chapter III. It is also from his Settlement Report that a large portion of the chapters dealing with Agriculture and Land Revenue Administration is derived. Many interesting details about superstitions and caste-practices have been given by Mr. Russell, who is now writing the Central Provinces Ethnographic Survey articles. A report written by Major Wardlow in 1831 and Captain Ward's Settlement Report of 1868 have provided some useful information about the district in the early days of the British administration. For the historical chapter the writer has gone to Sir W. H. Sleeman's manuscript note on the Garha-Mandla kingdom and some papers kindly provided by Mr. Hira Lal, Assistant Superintendent in the Census Office. Material for the chapter on Forests was supplied by Mr. Parsons, Forest Divisional Officer. The thanks of the writer are also due to the many other gentlemen, who have contributed information, sometimes verbal and sometimes in the form of notes, for various paragraphs; among them should be numbered Mr. Thompson, a former Forest Officer, whose note on the Agaria caste of iron-smelters is of particular interest, Mr. Kenny, the present Forest Officer, and Mr. Harvey, the Civil Surgeon.

F. R. R. R.

MANDLA,

15*th August* 1912.

MANDLA DISTRICT GAZETTEER.

CONTENTS.

APPENDIX.

LIST OF MAPS AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

PARAGRAPH INDEX.

CHAPTER I.—GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

CHAPTER II.—HISTORY AND ARCHÆOLOGY.

CHAPTER III.—POPULATION

CHAPTER IV.—AGRICULTURE.

CHAPTER V.—LOANS, PRICES, WAGES, MANUFACTURES, TRADE, COMMUNICATIONS.

CHAPTER VI.—FORESTS AND MINERALS.

Page

CHAPTER IX.—GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

APPENDIX—GAZETTEER OF TAHSILS, TOWNS, IMPORTANT VILLAGES, RIVERS AND HILLS.

Name of Place—

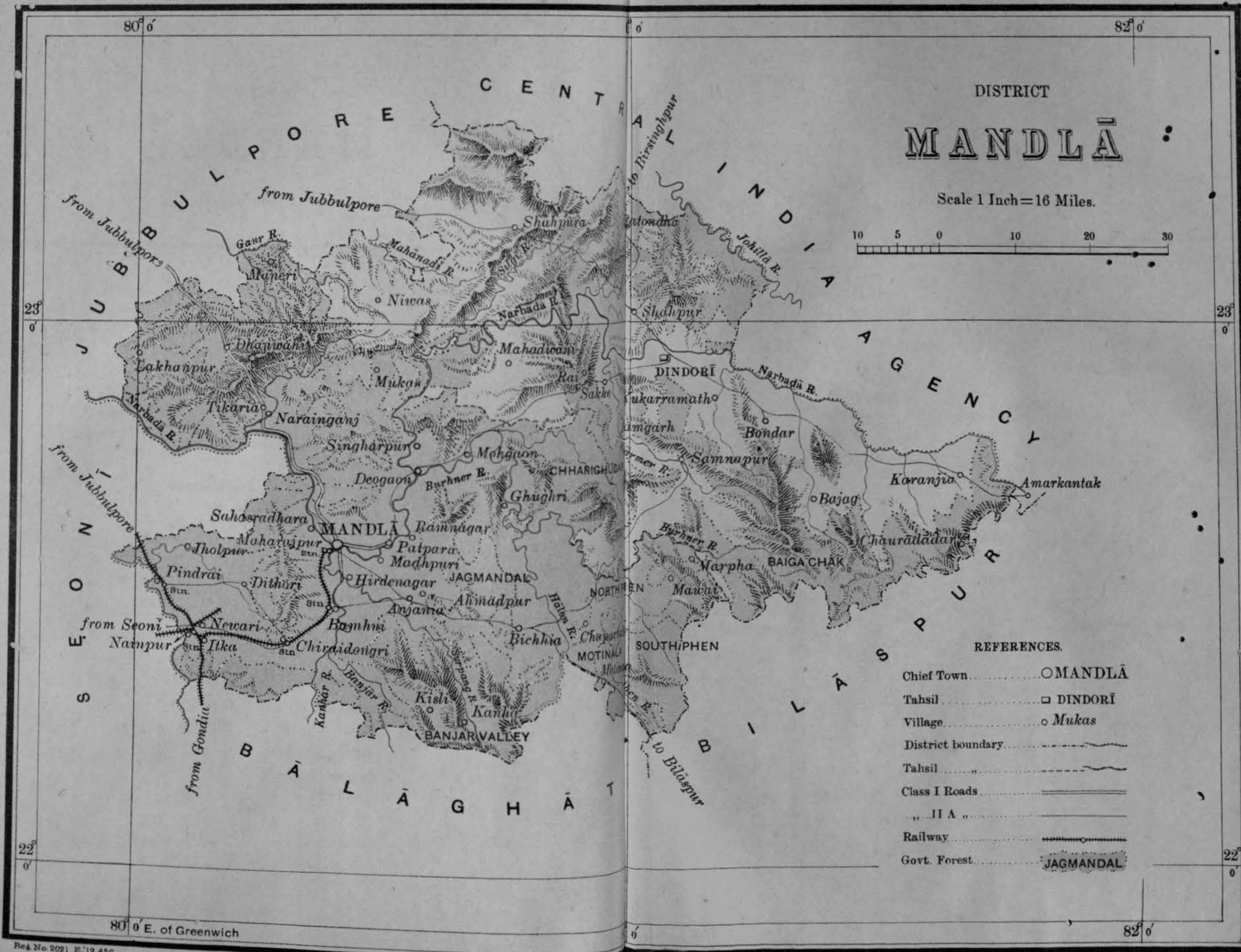
List of Deputy Commissioners who have held charge of Mandla District since its constitution, and the dates of their periods of office.

Name of Deputy Commissioner.	Period.	
	From	To
Captain Waddington*	1-1-60	31-3-62
	1-3-64	31-3-65
Captain A. G. W. Harris	1-4-62	8-1-64
Captain C. H. Plowden	9-1-64	28-2-64
Major J. J. Fulton	1-4-65	30-4-66
Captain H. C. E. Ward	1-5-66	23-8-68
	1-12-68	27-4-69
	1-11-72	28-2-73
Lieutenant J. Ducat	24-8-68	30-11-68
Captain C. H. Grace	28-4-69	30-11-69
	17-10-91	15-3-92
Major J. C. Wood	1-12-69	11-3-72
Captain J. A. Temple	12-3-72	31-3-72
Lieutenant C. James	1-4-72	31-10-72
	1-3-73	31-3-75
Colonel T. H. B. Brooke	1-4-75	16-3-77
	1-6-79	16-4-81
	1-5-81	15-4-83
	23-2-84	21-5-87
	1-7-87	24-2-88
T. E. Ellison, Esq., I.C.S. ...	17-3-77	31-3-77
	16-4-83	22-2-84
Colonel J. Ashburner	1-4-77	15-9-77
	1-12-77	28-2-78
Captain E. W. C. H. Miller ..	16-9-77	30-11-77
	1-3-78	13-1-79
Colonel Newmarch	14-1-79	31-5-79
J. P. Goodridge, Esq., I.C.S. ...	17-4-81	30-6-81
A. L. Saunders, Esq., I.C.S. ...	12-5-87	30-6-87
Colonel T. W. Hogg	25-2-88	16-10-91

*The first to reside permanently in Mandla.

List of Deputy Commissioners who have held charge of Mandla District, etc.—(concld.)

Name of Deputy Commissioner	Period. From	Period. To
Syed Ali Muhammad	16-3-92	31-10-92
	21-2-93	28-2-94
	25-3-95	13-9-97
L. Gordon, Esq., I.C.S.	1-11-92	20-2-93
J. Walker, Esq., I.C.S.	1-1-95	24-3-95
W. N. Maw, Esq., I.C.S. ...	14-9-97	22-12-97
	1-5-98	31-3-99
E. A. deBrett, Esq., I.C.S. ...	23-12-97	31-3-98
L. E. P. Gaskin, Esq., I.C.S. ...	1-4-98	30-4-98
	1-1-1900	30-11-01
W. M. Crawford, Esq., I.C.S. ...	1-4-99	31-12-99
	1-12-01	1-4-02
	16-5-02	1-7-03
	25-7-03	25-4-04
Balaji Gangadhar, Esq.	2-4-02	15-5-02
	2-7-03	24-7-03
	4-9-05	8-9-05
H. Nunn, Esq., I.C.S.	26-4-04	20-11-04
	20-4-08	5-1-09
E. H. Blakesley, Esq., I.C.S. ...	21-11-04	3-9-05
	1-12-05	19-4-08
W. E. Ley, Esq., I.C.S. ...	9-9-05	30-11-05
	1-3-09	11-7-09
Muhammad Abdus Sattar, Esq. ...	6-1-09	28-2-09
R. A. Wilson, Esq., I.C.S. ...	12-7-09	5-5-10
R. V. Russell, Esq., I.C.S. ...	6-5-10	30-6-12
	1-8-12	......
F. R. R. Rudman, Esq., I.C.S. ...	1-7-12	31-7-12



Reg. No. 2021 E.'12.450

Specially prepared for the Assistant Commissioner Mandlā, from information supplied by him.

MANDLA DISTRICT.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

BOUNDARIES AND PHYSICAL FEATURES.

1 Mandla District*, which forms the south-east portion of the Jubbulpore Division, lies between latitude 23°-22′ and 22°-12′ North, and longitude 80°-1′ and 81°-50′ East. On the north it is bounded by Jubbulpore District and Rewah State, and on the south and west by Balaghat and Seoni Districts respectively. The District forms a part of the high and rugged tableland on the Satpura Hills, which separates the cotton-growing country of the south from the wheat-growing extension of the Malwa plateau on the north, and is the watershed of three distinct river-systems. The total area is 5,089 square miles, and it is thus the fourth largest district in the Central Provinces, but it is divided into only two Tahsils, that of Mandla on the west and that of Dindori or Ramgarh on the east. The greatest breadth from east to west is about 114 miles, and the length from north to south 83 miles. In the south-west of the district immediately around the town of Mandla is a small, level plain of good land about 400 square miles in extent, and containing some 200 well-settled and closely cultivated villages; this is known as the "Haweli" or rice country, and the "Pathar" or wheat tract. Elsewhere there are some small and scattered tracts of level black soil villages; but the greater part of the district is very rugged and mountainous, and is

Physical Aspects.

* Most of this Chapter was written by Mr. Bell, I. C. S.

still what it has always been to natives of other parts of the Province, the Ultima Thule of civilisation, the dreaded home of the tiger, the Gond, and the devil.

Hill-ranges.

2. The tangled confusion of peak and range, which constitutes the district of Mandla, resolves itself on examination into the spurs and sub-ranges of the Maikal Hills, and forms an ill-defined watershed between Eastern and Western India. These spurs and ranges divide the face of the country into a number of valleys and tablelands, which, gradually increasing in height from west to east, culminate at last in the plateau of Chauradadar and form a barrier between the highlands of Raigarh-Bichchea and the Khaloti or lowlands of Chattisgarh. The principal minor ranges are the Jagmandal, a high and well-defined forest running from north to south and separating the lowlying Haweli from the Raigarh-Bichchea plateau, and the Daldali, which separates the upper valleys of the Nerbudda and the Burhner as far as their junction at Deogaon. Further east of these lies a multitude of unnamed spurs and bluffs, which run north to the Nerbudda and furrow the country into a series of small and fertile valleys. Of these the most important are the basins of the Machrar, Chakrar, Kharmar, Seoni and Tar rivers. After giving birth to the Nerbudda, the main range takes a bold sweep round to the north-west, broadening out into the rugged and mountainous country north of Shahpur and forming the watershed between the Johilla, a Gangetic river, and the northern or right bank feeders of the Nerbudda. West of the Banjar a low spur of the eastern Satpuras runs east from the Seoni border, which gradually increases in height until at Amjhar, close to Bamhni, it turns north and forms the watershed between the Waingunga system on the west and Banjar system on the east. Northwards of Mandla town there is a general rise in elevation culminating in the rugged tableland of Mokas, which divides



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THE NERBUDDA AT MANDLA.

the Mandla and Jubbulpore Hawelis, the Nerbudda and Gangetic river systems.

Elevation.

3. The elevation of the district varies from 1,345 feet above sea level at Cheolia (where the Nerbudda turns into Jubbulpore) to 3,454 feet, the top of an isolated hill near Barbaspur in the east of Dindori Tahsil. The general elevation however with exception of the banks of the Nerbudda and Banjar Rivers and the Haweli and Pathar tracts is from 1,800 to 2,400 feet. The height of Maharajpur, a suburb of Mandla across the river, is 1,479 feet, and that of the fort at Mandla 1,487 feet. Of the tablelands the Pathar and Haweli on the west are between 1,400 and 1,500 feet high: Raigarh-Bichchea or the central plateau varies from 1,800 to 2,100 feet, while the extreme upper valleys of the Nerbudda have an average elevation of 2,550 feet; Chauradadar plateau, the most eastern part of the district, averages over 3,000 feet. The north and north-western parts, comprising the mountainous Mokas and Bijegaon country, also lie high, averaging about 2,000 feet, except in the vicinity of the Nerbudda and Gour rivers.

Rivers.

4. The principal river system of the district is that of the Nerbudda; the Pathar tract, however, is drained by the Alone, a small tributary of the Waingunga forming the south-west boundary of the district; and the extreme north and north-west of Dindori Tahsil are watered by the Johilla and lesser Mahanaddi, which eventually find their way into the Ganges. The actual source of the Nerbudda is at Amarkantak, a spot of great sanctity and renown some three miles outside the Mandla border in Rewah State. It flows at once into British territory near the famous falls of Kapildhara, whence it pursues a tortuous and usually rock-bound course past the Tahsil village of Dindori and the town of Mandla, and then on into the Seoni and Jubbulpore Districts. On its left bank the principal tributaries are the Banjar, which flows north from Balaghat District through the Haweli and joins

the Nerbudda at Mandla; the Burhner, which flows west from the Baiga Chak and after being joined at Ghugri by the Halon, the chief river of Raigarh Bichchea, empties its waters into the Nerbudda in the sacred precincts of Deogaon; and the Kharmer, which rising near Kutela-Mugdara in Dindori Tahsil, flows westward for thirty-five miles along a narrow, fertile valley, and joins the Nerbudda at Keolari. On the right bank the most important tributaries are the Balai, flowing south-west from Piparia through the small but prosperous plain of Narainganj, and joining the Nerbudda at Kikra; and the Gour, which rises at Katang Seoni three miles south of Niwas in the Dindori Tahsil and for a short distance forms the boundary between Mandla and Jubbulpore Districts, finally after a course of about forty miles emptying itself into the Nerbudda at Khirehni in Jubbulpore District. In addition to the important rivers the Nerbudda receives the waters of innumerable smaller streams throughout the district. Among the southern tributaries may be mentioned the Machrar, Chakrar, Seoni and Tar, which drain the northern slopes and valleys of the Maikal hills; to the north the most important are the Silgi and Kanai, which rise in the mountainous country around Shahpur. The country on both sides of the upper reaches of the Nerbudda is generally for two or three miles cut up by abrupt ravines and small dry nallahs, which give it a very rugged appearance; and both the Nerbudda and its tributaries are usually confined between rocky banks sometimes rising to over a hundred feet in height.

Scenery.

5. In point of grandeur and picturesqueness the scenery of the district is second to none in the Province. The town of Mandla itself is beautifully situated on a sharp bend of the Nerbudda at its junction with the Banjar; the neighbourhood is thickly studded with fine old mango groves and picturesque ruins, and it is hard to imagine a scene more lovely than the view up the river from Kacherry Ghat, the distant hills,



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the broad stretch of the sacred river and dazzling white temples nestling in their dark green mango groves. Some parts of the district, like the undulating grass prairies of Raigarh Bichchea or the bare and shadeless plains of Dindori, are dull and uninspiring, but the rugged jungles of the north and the almost evergreen Sal forests of the Banjar valley have a grandeur all their own; and it is well worth a morning's march to see, perhaps from a height of a thousand feet, an isolated valley amongst the hills, the brilliant green of the young crops set off by the darker shades of the forest that surrounds them.

Geology.

6. The district is mainly covered by overflowing trap, and its geology presents little variety. In the south, in the immediate vicinity of the Banjar and eastward as far as the Kawardha border, there is a narrow strip of country never more than fifteen miles broad, in which the crystalline formation is uppermost. East of the Banjar valley also granite, limestone and syanite appear in some places on the edges of hills and *nalas*; and occasionally, as for instance at Bamhni, Chiraidongri and Thawar, sandstone is uncovered. Generally speaking however trap is the uppermost rock, capped by laterite on the highest peaks. The rugged hills and valleys of the east are of volcanic origin. Everywhere, both in the higher plateaus and in the valleys, the rocks are obscured by soil, generally recent or lateritic murram, the commonest soil in the district, but also by the rich layers of decomposed trap popularly known as black-cotton. These layers are never of very great depth except in the more level portions of the district, particularly along the valleys of the Nerbudda, Banjar and Thawar; and the sides of the hills and hillocks are almost invariably bare.

BOTANY.

Trees of the Forest.

7. The timber tree *par excellence* of the district, is the *Sāl* (*Shorea robusta*), which grows most luxuriantly in the

sandy soils to the south of Mandla Tahsil. It is also to be found in Dindori Tahsil as far west as Shahpur, but in those parts it is not so large or so valuable a timber tree as in the Mandla Tahsil, where it has been worked in regular felling series. The tree is practically evergreen, taking on a bright new coat of foliage in April almost as soon as the old leaves have fallen: and a visit at this time of the year to the Sal coppices of the Phen, Motinala and Banjar Reserves is a welcome rest to eyes wearied with the faded colours of the plains. The Sal grows peculiarly straight, and rises to a height of 90 feet, with a girth of 14 or 15 feet. It loves moisture, but the young seedlings are unable to stand the frosts, which annually attack the low-lying swamps and valleys. The appearance of a Sal forest is therefore very typical: the low-lying spots, where water is prone to collect, consist of open glades of green or yellow grass, spotted about, wherever there is the least elevation above the swamps, with lofty Sal trees. The lower eminences and foot hills are also covered with Sal, gradually decreasing in luxuriance until the sub-soil water is too deep to support the trees, and a mixed jungle of *sāj*, *aonla* and other drought resisting trees, or else an open plateau of dry yellow grass, takes their place. Of other timber trees the most important are the teak (*Tectona grandis*), which grows best in the Jagmandal Range and in the jungles north of Mandla; and the *Sāj* (*Terminalia tomentosa*), which is met with all over the district and is worshipped by the aboriginals. *Tinsa* (*Ougeinia dalbergioides*) is important to agriculturists as the most durable wood for ploughs. Formerly the Gonds and Dhimars were in the habit of distilling some poisonous decoction from its bark when they went a-fishing, but the supply of timber was not equal to the demand, and there was grave danger of its total extermination. Government has now taken steps to protect the tree, and it cannot be cut without permission. *Dhawā* (*Anogeissus latifolia*) is also common and of similar agricultural import-

ance. Building woods inferior to saj, sal, and teak, but of some value and common throughout the district, are the *Dhāmin* (*Grewia tillæfolia*), the *Bīja* (*Pterocarpus marsupium*), the *Lendia* or *Lenria* (*Lagerstrœmia parviflora*), the *Hardu* (*Adina cordifolia*), and *Kohā* (*Terminalia arjuna*), a riverside relative of the saj. The high and upright *Sālai* (*Boswella serrata*) is common enough and, besides supplying an aromatic resin much sought after for sacrificial purposes, is also used for indoor woodwork. The three most beautiful flowering trees are the *Kachnār* (*Banhinia variegata*), the sweet smelling blossoms of which resemble the azalea: the *Amaltas* or *Jhagaruwā* (*Cassia Fistula*) with its hanging clusters of golden flowers contrasting with its leaves of copper and emerald: and the *Chiola* or *Palās* (*Butea frondosa*) common everywhere on the scene of past or present cultivation. In March and April this tree is one of the most gorgeous sights of the plains with its brilliant orange blossoms on a background of velvety olive-green sepals. It springs up at once as a weed wherever cultivation in black soil temporarily ceases; but it is of many uses in the open treeless country in which it is most commonly found. Its roots are made into fibre for rope, its flowers provide an orange dye, its leaves are used for making platters and cups, and its wood for fuel and, when *tinsā* is not obtainable, for ploughs; in this district moreover it is the most important lac-producing tree. The *Kosum* (*Schleichera trijuga*) is fairly common, and is also occasionally used for lac-growing.

Fruit-trees.

8. The fruit trees of the district are numberless. The most important commercially is the *Harra* or myrabolam (*Terminalia chebula*), the fruit of which is exported for tanning from both Tahsils; in Dindori in fact many villages derive their sole importance from the enormous *harra* plantations, which when the leaves are out, look like nothing so much as an English orchard in spring. Of the edible fruit trees the

most important is the *Mahuā* (*Bassia latifolia*), the white flowers of which, sweet and sickly to taste and smell, form when dried a large part of the food of the aboriginal tribes, being eaten as porridge or distilled into country liquor. Its foliage affords excellent shade except in March, and its brilliant hues form a pleasing contrast to a dull-coloured April landscape. The *Aonla* or *Aonrā* (*Phyllanthus Emblica*) is common everywhere, its handsome wax-like fruit being much valued medicinally for bowel complaints. Other important fruit trees bulking largely in the diet of the aboriginals and low-caste Hindus are the *Khamēr* (*Gmelina arborea*), the *Jāmun* (*Engenia Jambolana*), the *Chār* or *Achar* (*Buchanania latifolia*), the plum-like fruit of which is coated with sugar to make the sweetmeat known as *chironji*, and the *Tendu* (*Diospyros tomentosa*).

Trees of the open country.

9. Among the trees of the open country are found many species of fig, as for instance the Banian or *Bar* (*Ficus bengalensis*), the *Pipar* (*Ficus religiosa*), and the *Umar* (*Ficus glomerata*). The *Babul* (*Acacia arabica*), which generally grows near villages and tanks, is rare in this district, as are also the *Nīm* (*Melia Azadirachta*) and *Amli* or *Imlai*, the tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*). The *Bakain* or *Baranim* (*Melia Azedarach*) is the only tree which can now be induced to grow on the barren and frost bitten plains of Rampur and Ramgarh, and takes the place of the village *pipar* amongst the Rathor Telis of those tracts. The mango (*Mangifera indica*) is of course a more or less cultivated tree, but thrives poorly in this district except in the open country round Mandla, where there are numerous very large groves. Very occasionally it is found wild round the springs at the head of forest-clad ravines, especially near Amarkantak, but the frosts are generally fatal to them. Bamboos are fairly common all over the district, chiefly in ravines and along the banks of rivers. They are of two kinds, the *bāns* or common bamboo

(*Dendrocalamus strictus*) and the *Kattang bāns* (*Bambusa arundinacea*), which grows to a much greater height. The latter survives in only a few places, but appears once to have been common, seeing that so many villages are called by its name, such as Kattangi, Kattang Seoni and Kattangwara. Green bamboos are used for making floor matting (*chitai*), screens, umbrellas, fences, ropes, and winnowers; mature, but not dry, bamboos for roofs, stilts, furniture, and traps; dead and dried bamboos for roofing and fuel.

Shrubs.

10. One of the most important shrubs is the *Karondā* (*Carissa Carandas*), which is found in ravines and open country; the flower is small and white, possessing a strong sweet scent, and its fruit is edible. The *Sihāru* (*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*) grows on hill sides and the poorer soils. It is a large shrub with rough leaves through which the bison love to push their way, to scratch themselves. The flower was formerly used for dyeing, but that industry has now disappeared. The shoots are employed in the manufacture of rough baskets. The *Nirguri* (*Vitex Negundo*) grows in shingly river beds; it flowers in the rains and its shoots are used for rough basket work. In the Sal forests the most common shrub is the *Surteli* (*Woodfordia floribunda*) which has a bright-red flower, and in the Dindori forests a species of Strobilanthes, which forms most of the undergrowth. This shrub flowers at intervals of five years, on which occasions it is popularly believed that the bees from all over India flock to the Dindori jungles to feast upon its blossoms.

Grasses.

11. Mandla district is celebrated in the Central Provinces for its excellent grazing grounds, to which numberless herds are driven from all the neighbouring districts. The principal grazing grasses are the *Musail* (*Iseilema Wightii*) and *Kel* (*Andropogon annulatus*). *Musail* has a thick, bushy ear, *Kel* a thin ear, and both are of great value as fodder. Owing however to the difficulties of transport and the great demand

for grass in the district itself there is practically no export trade in this commodity. *Ukri* (*Saccharum officinarum*), *Chhotiganair* (*Anthistiria scandens*), *Kāndia* and *Purwa* or *Purwaya* are other fodder-grasses which are more or less common, but cattle will not eat them when other varieties are easily accessible. The ordinary *Dūba* (*Cynodon Dactylon*), though not common except near cultivation, is the most popular of all grazing grasses. For thatching the coarse *Senā* (*Pollinea argentea*) is freely used, as it rapidly becomes hard and dry; other varieties are the *Lampā* or *Sukrā*, (*Heteropogon contortus*), *Barigunair* (a tall, red-topped grass sometimes known as *bhonr*), *Chari* and *Kāns*. The latter (*Saccharum spontaneum*) is a very persistent weed; as soon as black soil is left fallow, it rapidly springs up over the whole surface, and when once it has obtained hold, can only be eradicated by deep ploughing in the hot weather or by irrigation. The medicine grasses are *Nāgarmotha* and *Lampā* or *Sukra* (*Heteropogon contortus*), from which a kind of oil is extracted. For rope making *Bahai* (sometimes known as Bawai or Munjh) and *Mohua* are used, and for brooms the *Urai*.

Wild Animals.

12. The district is perhaps one of the best shooting-grounds in India for big-game, though it has now ceased to be the happy hunting ground described in Forsyth's "Highlands of Central India." The buffalo is a very rare visitor even in the extreme east of Dindori, and the hog-deer is never seen. Parts of the district contain practically no game of any kind; such as the Haweli and Pathar, where the steady advance of civilisation has driven out everything except an occasional black buck or blue-bull; and again in the treeless, central tract of Dindori; or the Baiga Reservation, where the axes, traps, and arrows of the Baiga have cleared his once teeming jungles of every vestige of animal life, so that the advent of a hare within his limits is a red-letter day

Localities.

celebrated by the whole village turning out for a hunt. Elsewhere however the jungles teem with game, and a morning stalk through the Motinala, Phen, or Banjar Reserves is usually rewarded by the sight of scores of animals of half a dozen different varieties.

Tiger.

13. The tiger (*Felis tigris*) is common all over the district, though he is more difficult to obtain than in less fortunate districts, because of the extent of the jungles and the difficulty of beating. Forsyth's rough division into game-eaters, cattle-eaters and man-eaters still holds good; the amount of wild game obtainable and the accessibility of cattle alone determine the class to which a tiger will belong. Thus the man-eaters, whose depredations in old days were greatly exaggerated by the ignorance of the outside world, are mainly confined to Dindori Tahsil, where game is comparatively scarce and few cattle come up to graze. It will be long before the "Sakke man-eater" ceases to be a very lively memory in the district. It is probable that an old tigress originally began the terrible vendetta against man, which for eight years continued unchecked along the range of hills from Bajag to the Raighat, on the Mandla-Dindori Road (a distance of over forty miles), and on the death of the tigress from old age or accident several tigers carried on her work in this range. Four tigers, of which three were known man-eaters, were shot there in the year 1905 by an officer on special duty for the purpose; yet even now sporadic human kills take place. At the height of the scare certain passes on this range, notably the Raighat (on the Mandla-Dindori Road) and the Mangarh Ghat (near Bajag) were practically closed to traffic, even the Government mails being diverted to another route. The boldness of the attack almost surpasses belief; the animals have been known to select a victim from amongst several persons cowering in a moving cart, and even to attack a marriage procession. At the Raighat, which was their favourite haunt, the tigers used to

lie up in small clearings covered with long grass on the edge of the road; and Mr. Thompson, the Forest Officer, who finally shot them, stated that he found scores of forms in these patches, which shows that for every victim who was carried off dozens of travellers must have passed unscathed within a few yards of the brutes. Altogether more than a hundred persons are popularly supposed to have been killed by them. Human kills, though by no means unknown in other parts of the district, have nowhere become so general as in this locality. In the grazing grounds many hundreds of cattle are annually carried off by tigers, but in the main the tigers of Mandla are game-eaters, which accounts for the comparative difficulty of securing them.

Panther.

14. The Panther (*Felis pardus*) locally known as *chitta, chitwa, tindua* or *gulbāg*, is common throughout the district, and occasionally carries off smaller domestic animals such as dogs, goats, and calves; here however it is far less destructive in this respect than in more settled districts like Damoh and Saugor. It is an expert tree climber, and Mr. Bell, the Settlement Officer, himself found panther-kills placed twelve or fourteen feet above the ground in the fork of a tree; Mr. McCrie, a former Forest Officer, relates that as he was passing beneath a tree a young and practically unharmed sambhur was dropped almost on to his head, to be followed immediately by the panther which had carried it up among the branches.

Wild dogs.

15. Wild dogs (*Kuon rutilans*), known as *sonkutta* or *bankutta*, are common all over the district and are very destructive both to cattle and game. They are handsome creatures with golden, dark-tipped hair and a bushy tail, in all about the size of a jackal. They have no great speed but unfailing scent and unlimited endurance, and the fleetest animal is doomed when once a pack of them crosses its trail. They hunt in couples or packs without giving tongue, though the

plaintive, long-drawn whine of a youngster searching for his mates will occasionally betray their position. Fear is unknown to them, and there is at least one authentic case of their attacking a tiger; they eat everything, carrion, vegetables, and occasionally their own kind.

Bear.

16. The only bear is the Sloth or Indian bear (*Melinsus ursinus labiatus*), locally known as *bhālu* or *rīch*, a deaf and foolish creature, which, though somewhat shy of man, can generally be cut off at daybreak on his way up from cultivation to his rocky lair. As a rule they are not dangerous, but if they are wounded or cornered will inflict a terrible mauling about the face of their enemy. A few years ago a pair of these animals in the Motinala Range took to very evil courses, even mauling a man and his wife inside their house, into which they were probably drawn by a stray dog amongst the' Indian corn. They are vegetable eaters, but have occasionally been found on the kill of another animal; Mr. Bell has been shown in Motinala Reserve what purported to be the kill of a bear in the fork of a tree. When nursing their young, they are particularly ferocious. Their manners in captivity are gentle enough, and the young can easily be brought up as pets. In the north and west of the district they are more or less rare, though in Forsyth's time they are said to have been common in the valley of the Nerbudda between Mandla and Jubbulpore, where they are now practically unknown. Their favourite haunts are the rocky hills on the East and South of the district, particularly the Motinala Range and the hills of Amarkantak.

Miscellaneous Carnivora, etc.

17. The wolf (*Canis pallipes*) is rare in Mandla, being only very occasionally found in the extreme East of Dindori Tahsil. The jackal (*Canis aureus*, locally called *laraia*) is common everywhere in open country, and is occasionally found in the jungles. The fox (*Vulpes Bengalensis*, locally called *lukaria*) and hyena

(*Hyaena striata*, locally *rerha* or *lakarbaghā*), though not rare, are far less common. Of the various cats four species are known: the common jungle-cat (*Felis chars* or *ban-billi*), which preys mostly on small animals and game, particularly pea-chicks, partridge, quail and squirrels: the civet cat (*Viverricula malaccensis*), which is rare and only found in the thickest jungles: the *Felis ornata*, or sandy-coloured cat, and the *Felis torquata*. In addition to these it is possible that the *Felis Bengalensis* or leopard cat, and the lynx, though very rare, may exist in the eastern part of Dindori Tahsil. Of squirrels the well-known *galehri* is as common here as anywhere, and the Pachmarhi squirrel, a large dark-furred variety, the habitat of which is mainly in the Satpuras, is found in the Amarkantak hills. The common otter (*Lutra vulgaris* or *ood*) is found in most rivers and nallahs. The hare (*Lepus timidus*, locally known as *kharra* or *khargosh*) is general throughout the district. Of monkeys there are only two, the *langūr* or grey monkey, which is found both in deep jungle and in cultivation, where it does great damage to crops, and the common red monkey (*Macacus Rhesus*) generally found near civilisation. The mongoose (*Herpestes mungo*, locally *neola*), the traditional enemy of the snake, though not often seen, is frequent enough, and the porcupine or *sehi* is common, particularly in the jungles to the North. The wild pig (*Sus cristatus*, locally called *suar*, *paddi*, *ban barar*, *dukar*, or *badjānwar*) is very common both in and out of the jungles, and is peculiarly destructive to crops. Though by preference a clean feeder, he is by no means so fastidious as is generally supposed; he will often visit and enjoy a dead and fairly advanced kill. He will not as a rule attack at sight, but cases of a full grown boar attacking a wayfarer unprovoked are not uncommon. The victim is then lucky if he escapes with his life; and woe betide the man who happens to stumble on the neatly woven little grass huts within which the sow suckles her young during the rains.

The flesh of a pig is rather coarse and resembles poor and underfed beef rather than pork; properly cured however it makes passably good hams and excellent pork pies.

Bison.

18. The bison (*Bos gaurius*, locally known as *banboda*, *banbhainsā* or *pagari*) is fairly numerous. During the open season the largest herds are found in the Banjar and South Phen Reserves, where there are several hundred head. A smaller herd also live in the Jagmandal Reserve, and others in the jungles north of Shahpur round Sarastal where they come in from Rewah State. During the rains the bison's range is widely extended, and his tracks may be found almost anywhere east of the Mandla-Jubbulpore Road and the Haweli country. They are timid until wounded, but then become exceedingly dangerous; when approached from down-wind, they will frequently stand until the hunter is at quite close quarters, although they may have seen him from afar. It is however quite impossible to approach them down-wind; they are off at the first whiff of the tainted breeze. An old or wounded bull will sometimes take to worrying travellers along frequented paths, and one or two accidents have recently occurred from this cause.

Deer and Antelope: Barasinga.

19. One of the commonest deer is the so-called swamp-deer or barasinga (*Cervus duvanceli*; locally known in Gondi as *garni* and in Hindi as *bārasinga*, *lāl sāmbhar*, or simply *sāmbhar*). This animal is generally supposed to be partial to swampy and low-lying land in the sal-tracts; but curiously enough, they have apparently extended their range of late years, finding their way into the dry and high-lying jungle north of Shahpur, the Raighat, and Jagmandal Reserve. Their principal haunt however is the Banjar Reserve, where several thousand head are to be found, and to a less extent the Motinala and North and South Phen Reserves, all of which

are sal-forests. The head is usually ten-pointed, but twelve-pointers are by no means uncommon, though usually of inferior size to ten-pointers. Anything over thirty-five inches may be considered a good head, but forty-one inches is recorded by Burke, and Mr. Bell has shot a fifteen-pointer measuring forty inches. They afford little sport, being very easy to approach, particularly in the breeding season about Christmas, when a herd of seventy or eighty does and eight or ten stags is no uncommon sight. They have occasionally been shot in beats, though the genuine sportsman would allow a driven barasinga to pass. The horns begin to drop at the end of April and are complete again by November; but it is very dubious whether all stags drop their horns every year, and complete heads have frequently been seen at all times of the rains.

Chithal.

20. The next commonest deer is the beautiful *chithal* or spotted deer (*Cervus axis*), which is most frequently found in the well watered jungles of the South. It is rare in the Dindori Tahsil, but is not unknown in the jungles near Raighat and Shahpur. The breeding season is generally about March, but observes no regular rules; the shedding of the horns does not usually begin till June or July. The largest head recorded by Burke is 38¼ inches, but heads of 35 are quite common in this district, and nothing under 32 inches can be considered shootable. Like the barasinga and sambhur the chithal does not necessarily shed its horns every year. Mandla chithal very seldom have the typical clean six-pointed heads: several extra nodules can usually be seen, and frequently a well-developed point in excess. A chithal with three separate and fully developed horns has been shot in the South Phen Reserve; another Mandla head has thirteen points and nodules.

Sambhur.

21. The Sambhur (*Cervus unicolor* or *equinus*) is found throughout the district, wherever the jungle is extensive enough to give him

a good run. He is a very shy animal, difficult to approach, and therefore gives much better sport than the barasinga. Heads of good size, measuring 44 inches, have been found but these belong usually to the oldest and shyest stags, which keep to the most inaccessible parts of the jungle. Anything over 36 inches may be considered a good head, Horns with more than the typical six-points are not uncommon. The breeding season is in January, the horns beginning to drop in early April.

Other Deer.

22. *Cervulus muntjac*, the *khākar* or Barking deer, locally known as *gutri* or *ban bakri*, is common all over the district; his besetting sin is inquisitiveness, and he has often been seen in open plains of Dindori Tahsil, several miles away from any jungle. The mouse-deer or Cheorotain (*Tragulus meminua*, or *mungwari*) is common in the sal jungles of the South, but is not found in other parts of the district.

Antelopes.

23. Of antelopes the commonest is the black-buck or Indian antelope (*Antelope cervicapra* locally called *hiran* or *mirga*). It is found mainly in the open plains of Raigarh Bichchea and the central portion of Dindori. As in most jungly districts the horns do not run to any length, the best obtainable being about 24 inches; anything over 20 inches is considered a good head. In Dindori the animals are trapped in large numbers by Bahellias.

The *nilgai* or blue-bull (*Bos elephas tragocamelus*) locally called *nilgai* or *roz-sambhar*, is frequent everywhere in the poorer jungles adjoining cultivation or open grass plains. Its principal habitat is the plains of Raigarh Bichchea; on the other hand the animal is practically unknown in the heart of the sal forests.

The four-horned antelope (*Tetracerus quadricornis* or *bhiriya*, *chausinga* or *banbheri*) is fairly common, though not so much so as the Barking deer. The frontal horns which are generally mere knobs are sometimes wanting altogether.

The Chinkara (Indian Gazelle or ravine-deer, *Gazella bennettii*, locally called *chikrar, chota hiran*) is not very common, except in the north of Mandla and the east of Dindori Tahsil. A few are found in the Motinala Range.

Game Birds.

24. The district is a poor one for small game, particularly for snipe and duck. The commonest partridge is the "painter," (*Frarcolinus pictus*) whose raucous cry from amongst thick grasses may be heard throughout the district just before dark or during cloudy weather. The grey partridge (*Ortygornis pondicerinus*), a foul feeder usually found near village sites, is also fairly common. Of quail the *lawa* or grey quail, the bush-quail (*Perdicula asiatica*), the black-breasted or rain quail (*Coturnix coromandelica*), the larger and smaller button quails, and Blewit's Bush-quail are all found. The sand-grouse (*Pterodes exustus*) is fairly common in stony or sandy country. The green pigeon (*harrel*) may be seen anywhere, and the blue pigeon or *kabutar* is found in large numbers in disused wells or on the precipitous banks of the rivers of Dindori Tahsil. The peafowl or *mor* (*Pavo cristatus*) is a common sight throughout the district, and in some parts does considerable damage to the crops. Of jungle-fowl the red-spur fowl (*galloperdix spadicea*, or, in the parlance of the people, *ban murgi*) is fairly common everywhere as well as the red jungle fowl (*gallus gallinaceus*), which is also known locally as *ban murgi*.

Water Birds.

25. Water birds are very numerous, but snipe and duck are only to be found in a few particular spots. The best duck-shooting is to be had on the rivers of the Dindori Tahsil, where the duck regularly fly up stream for about ten minutes at dawn and down again just before dusk. Snipe are found in quantities only in the Hirdenagar tank near Mandla, and a few on the smaller tanks for about six miles around. They are almost unknown in Dindori Tahsil. The fantail

snipe (*Gallinago coelestis*) is commonest; but the jack snipe (*Gallinago gallinula*), the "painter" and probably the pintail are also found. The *saras* cranes (*Grus antigone*) are found in pairs and triplets everywhere. The *kurral* or demoiselle crane (*Anthropoides virgo*) is very common along the banks of the Nerbudda near Dindori village and for about six miles to the south. Its flesh makes excellent eating, but the bird is very shy and difficult of approach, and generally flies too high for a killing shot. Of duck the whistling teal and cotton teal are the commonest, and are indigenous. The Brahmani duck (*Casarea vertila*, or *chakkichak*) is also found on the Nerbudda, Banjar, and their tributaries in the open country until late in the hot weather. The common teal, the gargancy, the pintail, the mallard, and the pochard are fairly frequent, and the gadwall, wigeon, shoveller, and the red-headed pochard are occasionally found.

Fish.

26. Fish are fairly plentiful in the larger rivers, and run to a considerable size, a ninety pounder being not infrequent. Mahseer are said to be extremely rare, but the *khusha*, *saur*, *rohu*, *nain*, *karõt*, *bãm*, *gegrã*, and *katia* are fairly common. The *gegra* has no scales, but only a fin, and the *bãm* has no scales or fins and is really an eel. The tanks in Mandla are few and far between; the commonest tank-fish is the *saur*, which is fleshy and excellent eating. This fish has two small bones of a circular shape in its head from which a kind of diuretic medicine is distilled for use in the advanced stages of cholera. Another fish, the *châl*, which skims along the surface of the water, generally makes its way up little nallahs at the beginning of the rains, and is netted by the Baigas on its return. When the Nerbudda is in flood and coming down in spate, great numbers of fish of all sizes and varieties crowd up into sheltered corners out of the current, and as soon as the floods begin to subside, many a miraculous draught of fishes can be

obtained by a watchful Dhimar. In the Thawar river fair sized *jhingas* or prawns are found.

RAINFALL AND CLIMATE.

Rainfall.

27. Owing to the height of its mountain ranges the rainfall in Mandla District is fairly heavy. It is registered at Mandla and Dindori, the two Tahsil head-quarters, and the average annual fall since 1870 is 53·89 for Mandla and 51·61 for Dindori Tahsil. The maximum fall registered is 80·00 in Dindori in 1881, the minimum 23·52 in the same Tahsil in 1886. On the average both Mandla and Dindori receive practically the same amount of rain, but the distribution is somewhat different, the later rains in Dindori Tahsil being the heavier. For this reason the rice cultivation, that is practised in Mandla, is not popular in Dindori. The difference in distribution can be seen in the following table, which gives the average 1903-1910 :—

	June.	July.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
Mandla.	5·76	16·31	14·66	5·89	1·78	·69
Dindori.	4·41	18·60	15·61	6·88	3·88	·19

From two to three inches of rain may be expected during the spring and summer months, much of which falls in heavy showers between the middle of April and end of May, when it is of great importance ; for, when the ground has been slightly softened, a maximum area of light land can be broken up in the slack time for the cultivation of the kharif millets and oil-seeds. The average rainfall for the dry months is 5·44 inches, though in 1886 it only amounted to 0·65 in Dindori Tahsil.

Climate.

28. Mandla District extends over the highest plateaus of the Satpuras, ranging from 1,500 to 2,500 feet above sea-level ; in comparison with the low-lying plains of Jubbulpore and Raipur on the north and south it is cool and exhilarating. During the cold-weather months November to March a very heavy dew falls, and in December and January there are occasional

severe frosts, the thermometer frequently falling as low as 22 degrees Fahrenheit. The heat of the summer months is dry and healthy, and the nights are always pleasant. Unfortunately the rainy season, especially the latter part of it, is extremely unhealthy for Indians, though Europeans are not so much affected by it. Much distress and many deaths are due to malaria at this time of the year. No record is kept of the maximum and minimum temperatures; it seems however that in the hottest days of the hot weather the thermometer never registers more than 105 degrees in the shade, while in the cold weather there are frequently from one to ten degrees of frost in the open tracts.

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY AND ARCHÆOLOGY.

HISTORY.

Early History.

29. "The historian's duty," says Goethe, "is to separate the true from the false, the certain from the uncertain, and the doubtful from that which cannot be accepted;" but this becomes a task almost beyond the bounds of possibility, when as in the case of Mandla the only records are the highly-coloured chronicles of courtiers and a few inaccurate and most misleading inscriptions. It was only when the town of Mandla rose to some eminence as one of the seats of the Garha-Mandla dynasty that a number of courtly romance-weavers began to dip into the past and evolve an honourable Puranic origin for the reigning house. The real name of Mandla was said to be the Mahish Mandal or Mahishavati of ancient Sanskrit literature, the capital of Kartaviriya of the Thousand Arms, from whom were sprung the Garha-Mandla kings. Under the clear cold light of criticism however the weakness of the story becomes palpable; the Mahishavati of Sanskrit legend has been proved by Dr. Fleet to be Mandhata in Nimar District, whereas our Mandla is probably a survival of the word "Mandala" or feudatory state.*

We can divide the history of Mandla by the measure of our ignorance into three fairly distinct periods. From earliest times until the close of the sixth century A.D. the country appears to have been wrapped in an impenetrable mist of obscurity, cut off by its mountain barriers from the

*The Haihaya king, Kokalla, had eighteen sons, of whom the eldest became lord of Tripuri (in Jubbulpore District), while the others held the outlying "Mandalas" as his lieutenants. Mandla may have been the most important of these Mandalas, and was hence known as "the Mandala."

civilisation of both the north and the south. From 600 to 1200 A.D. the gloom though still profound is pierced by a few faint glimmerings of light, and from the year 1200 to the present day our knowledge becomes more and more trustworthy and detailed. As regards the ancient period we may be certain that the shock of the Macedonian phalanx on Porus' elephant corps awoke no echo in the mountains and forests of the Satpuras; Chandragupta Maurya, who raised himself to the throne of Hindustan on the ruins of Alexander's greatness, failed to carry his arms across the Nerbudda, and even his still more famous grandson, Asoka, whose empire stretched from the Himalayas to Madras, exercised only a nominal control over the "Hill and dale, Forest and field and flood" of the Central Indian Highlands. Although the missionaries of the pious emperor penetrated to the deepest recesses of his dominions, their ministrations did not enhance his authority in these parts, and, as Mr. Vincent Smith says, "the jungle tribes still enjoyed a limited autonomy under the suzerainty of the paramount power."

But this was a time of change in India; both in the North and in the South empires rose and fell. The Maurya, Sunga and Kanva dynasties passed away in Hindustan, while in the Deccan the Andhras emerging from their home at the mouths of the Godavari and Krishna rivers gradually spread their authority over the whole breadth of Central India. By the year 300 A.D. the Andhra sun had set, and a Rajput race, the Chalukyas, were the recognised lords of the South. So great did they become that in the year 612 A.D. they were able to repulse from the banks of the Nerbudda the greatest warrior of the age, Harsha, whose arms had relieved Hindustan of the horrors of the Hun occupation. Meanwhile, wedged in between the great empires of the North and South, and a source of envy or annoyance to neither of them, the little kingdom of Chedi, which corresponds roughly to the Central Provinces of

to-day, progressed quietly under the rule of its Kalachuri or Haihaya kings. The seat of the Haihayabansi kingdom was Tripuri (Tewar) in Jubbulpore District, within a few miles of Garha, the future Capital of Garha-Mandla. Tradition relates that in 875 A.D. the Haihaya king Kokalla died leaving eighteen sons, of whom the eldest assumed the reins of government at Tripuri, while the others administered the outlying provinces, of which Mandla appears to have been one. The Haihayabansi power reached its zenith in the year 1042, its marches extending perhaps to the Godavari; but at this point the process of disintegration began, until, weakened by the attacks of Malwa Pondwars and the Chalukyas of the South, it suffered in 1181 a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Baghel Raja of Rewah. The subject princes seized the opportunity to raise the standard of rebellion, among them a certain Jadhe Rao, Gond, one of the king's former servants, who assumed the dignity of royalty, making an old fellow-servant of his, Surbhi Pathak by name, his chief adviser. This Gond, Jadurai, was the first of the Garha-Mandla kings.

Legendary History.

30. It was only when the Garha-Mandla state rose to pre-eminence in Central India that the mass of legends and fairy stories was produced, which purports to be the history of the kingdom's early days. The Brahman chroniclers were unwilling to believe that the first king Jadurai was only a Gond by caste, that he had come to the throne so late as the twelfth century, and finally that they, the Brahmans, had had no part or parcel in the work of king making. To give an honourable longevity to the dynasty they adopted the simple expedient of putting Jadurai's date back some eight hundred years and interpolating a number of Sanskrit names, heroic or divine, to bridge the period between Jadurai and his actual descendants. Jadurai, they say,*

* This story is given by Sir W. Sleeman in his history of Garha-Mandla.

was the son of a Patel living near the Godavari (or, as others hold, a Rajput from Bandelkhand). He took service with one of the Haihayabansi Rajas of Lahnjee, and accompanied his master on a pilgrimage to Amarkantak, the source of the Nerbudda. One night, when he was keeping guard over the royal tent, he chanced to see two Gond men and a woman, followed by a large monkey. As they passed by him, the monkey gazed into his face and dropped some peacock feathers at his feet. His vigil ended, Jadurai gathered up the feathers, went to his hut and fell asleep. In the watches of the night the goddess Nerbudda appeared to him in a dream and told him that the people he had seen were not mortals, but Rama, Sita and Laxman, the monkey being their faithful attendant Hanuman ; the feathers were a signal that he would one day attain to sovereign power, provided he betook himself to a certain Surbhi Pathak, a Brahman recluse of Ramnagar, who was to be his guide in all things spiritual and temporal. Jadurai immediately threw up his post with the Lahnjee king, and visited Surbhi Pathak at Ramnagar. When he began to explain the cause of his visit, he was amazed to find that the holy man was well acquainted with his story ; for to him also had the goddess vouchsafed herself and informed him of Jadurai's great destiny. He then took Jadurai and led him into the mid-waters of the Nerbudda and there made him take a solemn oath that, if ever he should attain to sovereign power, he should appoint the holy man his first minister. The oath taken, he counselled Jadurai to go and offer his services to the Gond Raja of Garha and spare no effort to win the royal favour.

At that time the Raja had an only child, a daughter named Ratanavali, and finding himself declining and without hope of a son he took counsel of his chief warriors and priests as to the choice of a son-in-law. They bade him leave the choice to God, and to ascertain the divine will, advised him to assemble a great multitude on the river bank and loose a blue jay

amongst them. Should the bird alight on the head of any one, such was the one chosen of God to succeed him. The prince was delighted with this simple solution of his difficulties and on the day appointed released a jay in the midst of an immense concourse of people. It flew straight to Jadurai and alighted upon his head. At first the youth felt some scruples of conscience at allying himself with a lady of inferior caste, but his spiritual guide reconciled him to the marriage, stipulating that Jadurai should never eat from the hand of his bride, though their issue should be heir to the throne. The more punctilious chroniclers, unwilling to believe that there was any taint of low-caste blood in the veins of the Garha kings, assert that the Rajput Jadurai had no issue by this wife, his successor on the throne being the fruit of another alliance with a Rajput lady. In any case, Jadurai, the chosen bridegroom, ascended to the Gond Raja's throne, and true to his promise appointed Surbhi Pathak his chief minister. In other words, due allowance being made for ordinary oriental embroidery, this story goes to show that a needy adventurer named Jadurai conspired with a treacherous Brahman minister of the Gond king of Garha, subverted his master's power and possessed himself of his daughter. The story tells however not of the beginning but of the end of the Gond rule; for Jadurai institutes a new Rajput dynasty. It is however only a tissue of falsehoods concocted probably when Dalpat Shah, one of the Gond kings, took a Chandella Rajput princess to wife. Another legendary account of the rise of the Mandla dynasty is the following :—In Piparpani there once lived a farmer with his only daughter, Basanti. The farmer used to work daily in his fields, ploughing, sowing, or reaping, and his daughter each midday brought to him his food. On her way she used to pass an ant-hill, in the heart of which there lived a man in the guise of a serpent. One day, as the maiden sat and rested by the ant-hill, the serpent came towards her. The maiden was frightened and

took to her heels; but the serpent, assuming human form, called out after her, saying "Do not be afraid; I am a man. Come and talk with me daily." She obeyed his behest and in course of time became very enamoured of her strange play-fellow. Shortly afterwards she became pregnant, and on being questioned by her parents, admitted that the father of her child was a serpent, who had informed her that the child was to be called Dhanushah, and would in course of time become king of Mandla. The serpent's words fell true, and Dhanushah, his son by the farmer's daughter, was crowned king of Mandla, the date of his accession being 150 A.D.

Sangram Shah.

31. The genealogical tree of the Gond kings has been bequeathed to posterity by Raja Hirde Shah (circa 1667 A. D.) on a tablet of stone. In this inscription, which is the only lithic record left us by the Gonds, only the names of the kings are given; at least half of them are fictitious, many having been culled from the list of Haihayabansi kings of Tewar, and others, as General Cunningham remarks, from a still more noble source—the incarnations of God in their due order in Hindu mythology. Of the lives of the possessors of these illustrious names, how they ruled, and how they passed away, we know nothing until the spacious times of Sangram Shah, who, receiving some four or five districts only from his father in the year 1480, by the end of his reign was lord paramount of fifty-two. Near Garha he built the great reservoir which he called Sangram Sagor, and on its bank the Temple Bajnamath, dedicated to Bhairon the Terrible. In this place, the story goes, a Sanyasi, or religious mendicant, who had sworn an oath to offer up the blood of kings in sacrifice to Shiva, took up his abode, intending to make a victim of Sangram Shah. He persuaded the ambitious king that by due rite and ceremony he could so propitiate the deity of the Temple as to win his aid in extending the borders of his kingdom over all the neighbouring states. These rites and ceremonies were to be performed at night,

when no living soul but the prince and he might be present to witness them ; and a time was duly appointed. As Sangram Shah was about to start at midnight on this mysterious errand, a servant warned him that there was treachery afoot ; he therefore prayed that he might be present at the ceremony ; but this the king refused, and concealing a sword beneath his cloak, sallied out to his tryst. After some trifling preparations the priest requested him to begin the awful ceremony by walking thrice round a fire, over which was placed a cauldron of boiling oil, and then to fall prostrate before the God. While he was giving these instructions, the king noticed that the priest also was wearing a naked sword beneath his garment. "In such solemn and awful rites," he said, "every ceremony must needs be most scrupulously performed ; pray thee, therefore, go through them first and show me." The priest walked thrice round the fire, stopped, and begged the king to go through the simple ceremony of prostrating himself thrice before the idol, repeating each time certain mystical phrases. The king insisted on his going through this part of the ceremony also, and, perceiving that the priest was without doubt bearing a sword, was satisfied of his guilt and with one blow of his scimitar severed his head from his body. The blood spurted from the headless shoulders on to the image of the God, who started into life, crying "Ask, ask." "I pray thee," said the king, "give me victory over all my enemies, even as thou hast given it me over this miscreant." The God bade him fly a brown-coloured pennant, turn loose a jet-black horse from his stable and follow him whithersoever he might lead. This he did, and in a few years made himself master of fifty-two rich districts. This same Sangram Shah also built the fort of Chauragarh, which from its rocky steep still frowns over the vale of the Nerbudda near Gadarvara ; he himself continued to reside in the palace of Madan Mahal, part of which stands on the hill near Garha keeping watch and ward over the great reservoir and temple which he built.

Dalpat Shah and Durgawati.

32. Dalpat Shah, his son, removed the seat of his government to Singaurgarh, a hill fortress commanding the Garha-Saugor road. At this time the Rajput Raja of Mahoba had a daughter of surpassing beauty named Durgawati, between whom and Dalpat Shah a union had been partly arranged; but a previous attachment and the superiority of the Rajput lady's caste had interrupted the negotiations. The great attraction of the Garha ruler's person and worldly possessions prevailed with the princess, who conveyed to her admirer the news that she was willing to be taken by force from her father and the favoured suitor. He accordingly collected a great host, met and defeated her father and his rival and carried away Durgawati, a willing captive, to his castle of Singaurgarh. On his death four years later, his son, Bir Narayan, being about three years of age, Durgawati assumed the reins of government. Our knowledge of her administration is unfortunately very scanty, but from the little that we do know, it is clear that she deserves to be numbered among the great women of the world. Among the many works to which she put her hand, is the fine reservoir at Jubbulpore, named after her the "Ranital" (the lake of the Queen), while one of her hand-maidens made the sister tank of Cherital. At Mandla she kept her magnificent stud of fourteen hundred elephants, the fame of which was wafted as far as the Imperial Court at Delhi. During the fifteen glorious years of her regency the country grew so prosperous that the people paid rent to her in gold mohars and elephants.*

Asaf Khan's Invasion.

33. But such prosperity brought its unfailing nemesis. Fired by tales of her wealth and the hope of rich booty, Asaf Khan, Imperial Viceroy at Kora Manikpur, invaded her dominions in the year 1564 A. D., at the head of six thousand cavalry and twelve thousand well-disciplined infantry, with a train

* This is recorded in the Ayini Akbari.

of artillery. "He † was met by the Queen-regent at the "head of her troops near the fort of Singaugarh, and an "action took place, in which she was defeated. Unwilling "to stand a siege she retired after the action upon Garha; "and finding herself closely pressed by the enemy she con-"tinued her retreat among the hills towards Mandla; and "took up a very favourable position in a narrow defile about "twelve miles east of Garha. Asaf's artillery could not "keep pace with him in the pursuit, and attempting the pass "without it he was repulsed with great loss. The attack "was renewed the next day, when the artillery had come "up. The queen advanced herself on an elephant to the "entrance of the pass, and was bravely supported by her "troops in her attempt to defend it; but the enemy had "brought up his artillery, which opening upon her followers "in the narrow defile made great havoc among them "and compelled them to give way. She received a wound "from an arrow in the eye; and her only son, then about "eighteen years of age, was severely wounded and taken to "the rear. Durgawati in attempting to wrench the arrow "from her eye broke it, and left the barb in the wound; but "notwithstanding the agony she suffered she still refused to "retire, knowing that all her hopes rested on her being able "to keep her position in the defile, till her troops could "recover from the shock of the first discharges of artillery "and the supposed death of the young prince; for by one "of those extraordinary coincidences which are by the vulgar "taken for miracles, the river in the rear of her position, "which had during the night been nearly dry, began to rise "the moment the action commenced, and when she received "her wound, was pronounced unfordable. She saw that her "troops had no alternative but to force back the enemy "through the pass or perish, since it would be almost impos-"sible for any of them to escape over this mountain torrent

† The following account of the invasion is taken direct from Sir W. H. Sleeman's note on Garha-Mandla.

"under the mouths of their cannon; and consequently that "her plan of retreat upon Mandla was entirely frustrated by "this unhappy accident of the unseasonable rise of the river. "Her elephant-driver repeatedly urged her in vain to "attempt the ford. 'No,' replied the Queen, 'I will either "die here or force the enemy back.' At this moment she "received an arrow in the neck; and seeing her troops give "way and the enemy closing in around her, she snatched a "dagger from the driver and plunged it in her own bosom.

"She was interred at the place where she fell, and on her "tomb to this day the passing stranger thinks it necessary "to place as a votive offering, one of the fairest he can find "of those beautiful specimens of white crystal, in which the "hills in this quarter abound. Two rocks lie by her side, "which are supposed by the people to be her drums convert-"ed into stone; and strange stories are told of their being "still occasionally heard to sound in the stillness of the "night by the people of the nearest villages. Manifest signs "of the carnage of that day are exhibited in the rude tombs, "which cover the ground from that of the queen all the way "back to the bed of the river, whose inopportune rise pre-"vented her retreat upon the garrison of Mandla."

The Queen's son, Bir Narayan, was carried back to Chauragarh, where he was besieged by Asaf Khan and met his death during an assault. The few remaining troops lost heart, and the women, fearing dishonour if they fell into the hands of the enemy, set fire to the palace. All perished in the flames with the exception of two, one of whom was Durgawati's sister and the other a princess, to whom the young Bir Narayan had been betrothed. All the great wealth of the queen was carried away by the victorious general. One thousand of the royal stud of elephants fell into his hands as well as an immense booty of gold and silver and precious stones. A hundred jars of gold coins of the reign of Allah-ud-din, the first Mahomedan general who crossed the Nerbudda, were removed from Chauragarh; the coins

came into circulation again, and some, it is said, are still worn by the women of Garha as charms. On Asaf's departure an envoy was sent to the court of the Emperor Akbar to obtain his recognition of the accession of Chandar Shah, Dalpat's brother, to the throne. The ambassador was Churaman Bajpay, a descendant of Surbhi Pathak, the minister of Jadurao. He succeeded in his mission, but the emperor demanded as the price of his acquiescence the cession of the ten districts, that later formed the principality of Bhopal.* Chandar Shah reigned but for a few years and was succeeded by his second son, Madhukur Shah, who had treacherously killed his elder brother; but the vengeance of heaven was quick to follow and the murderer was visited by an incurable affliction of the head and limbs. Taking counsel of his wise men he learnt that the Providence, whom he had so wickedly incensed, could only be appeased by the sacrifice of his own person in the trunk of a dry Pipal tree. At Deogaon, about 12 miles from Mandla, a suitable tree was found and the king caused himself to be shut up in it and burnt to death.

Prem Narayan and Hirde Shah.

34. His son, Prem Narayan, who was paying court to the emperor at Delhi, on hearing the news, returned hot foot to Mandla, leaving his son Hirde Shah to represent him at the Imperial Court. Prem Narayan fell to the knife of a hereditary enemy, Jhujhar Singh, and Hirde Shah returned to avenge his death. Friendless and destitute of money or arms he chanced upon his old nurse at Chauragarh, who told him of a treasure concealed by his father before his assassination. With this at his disposal he soon won over the local squires and, aided by the Mohammadan lord of Bhopal, possessed himself of all the twenty-two military posts of his kingdom, finally defeating and slaying Jhujhar Singh under the walls of Chauragarh.

* Gonour, Bari, Chaukigarh, Rahatgarh, Makarai, Karu Bagh Kurwai, Raisin, Bhauraso, Bhopal.

In return for his aid he ceded the district of Opudgarh to the chief of Bhopal. The rest of his reign of 50 years he devoted to the improvement of his dominions, which had suffered sadly in the wars; the area under cultivation was increased and large numbers of thrifty yeomen—particularly Lodhis and Kurmis—were invited to take up land in the taluqa of Hirdenagar. Among his many good actions was the planting of a lakh of mango trees (the grove Lakheri in which Jubbulpore Cantonment now stands) and the making of Ganga Sagor, a fine reservoir in the neighbourhood of Garha. But, as Captain Ward says, it is only natural to suppose that Hirde Shah had seen enough of the encroachments of the Mogal emperors of Delhi to induce him to select a site for his capital more difficult of access than Garha. Accordingly he transferred the seat of government to Ramnagar, which lies within a few miles of Mandla, and there built himself a lordly pleasure house on the banks of the Nerbudda. In Samvat 1724 the palace was completed, and henceforward Mandla, which had formerly been an outlying district of Gondwana, became the centre of the Garha-Mandla kingdom.

Hirde Shah's successors.

35. On the death of Hirde Shah at a very advanced age the throne was disputed between his two sons, Chattar Shah and Hari Singh. Hari Singh, being the younger, was forced into sullen acquiescence of his brother's accession, but when the latter died, he obtained help from Bandelkhand and assassinated Kesari Shah, the son of Chattar Singh and next heir to the throne. Kesari Shah however left a young son, Narind Shah, who was taken to Ramnagar and there proclaimed the rightful sovereign. A force was collected on his behalf, and Hari Singh the usurper was defeated and killed on the field of battle. As soon as he was old enough to act for himself, the young prince left his palace at Ramnagar and established the seat of his government in the river-girt tongue of land

which is now the fort of Mandla. Scarcely had he made the change, when other claimants to the throne arose, and invited the Marathas to come to their assistance; but the Gond Rajah was well acquainted with the Maratha character, and by offering them a larger sum than his enemies could afford to better, purchased their neutrality. The price of peace however was very high, and when he died in 1731 A. D., he bequeathed to his son a kingdom, which was but a shadow of the wide dominions which he had inherited from his father.

The coming of the Marathas.

36. Having tasted once of the sweets of Mandla the Marathas were quick to find an excuse for a second visit. In the year 1742 the Peshwa invaded the country, killed the Rajah, Maharaj Shah, but allowed his son to succeed him on payment of an annual tribute of four lakhs. This constant drain on the resources of the kingdom proved too severe, and the country went to ruin. The broad acres of wheat and rice were allowed to lie fallow, from fallow they relapsed into virgin jungle, and the boundless inheritance of Durgawati was reduced to a beggarly revenue of fourteen lakhs. Even this scant pittance was further reduced by Raghoji Bhonsla, who assumed the Government of Deogarh and robbed the Gonds of six* more of the old Haihayabansi districts. Meanwhile the Mandla Court became the scene of innumerable intrigues and assassinations; the Peshwa, appeased by the gift of Panagah, Deori, and Gaurjhamar, deputed his self-assumed powers as arbiter of Central India to the Rajahs of Saugor. The latter readily took over the charge and performed their part with an enthusiasm and thoroughness worthy of a better cause. In cases of disputed succession the ordinary course adopted was to invite the disputants to a conference, assassinate them in cold blood, and put up a

* Korwahgarh, Santagarh, Laphagarh, Jhanjhangarh, Ditagarh, and Bankagarh

puppet prince. After a period of unceasing war and tumult, characterised by a "perfidia plus quam Punica" and a reckless disregard for human life or rights, the Maratha general Moraji finally reduced Narhar Shah, the last Gond Rajah of Mandla, celebrating his victory by putting the defeated general to death by torture. Henceforward Mandla became a Subah of the Saugor Marathas under a Subahdar subordinate to the Government at Jubbulpore.

The character of the Gond rule.

37. From the dearth of records and unreliability of local tradition it is hard to learn much of the character of the Gond rule, but the following notes of Sir W. Sleeman, found in the Record Office of Narsinghpur, shed some light on the internal policy of the Gond principalities :—"Under these Gond Rajas the district for the most part seems to have been distributed among feudatory chiefs, bound to attend upon the prince at his capital with a stipulated number of troops to be employed wherever their services might be required, but to furnish little or no revenue in money." The author goes on to describe how the heart of these Gond chieftains lay in their native jungles, into which they retreated further and further before the march of civilisation, while Hindu cultivators driven south by famine and domestic feuds, reclaimed the fertile plains, giving a few measures of grain or a pot of ghi for immense tracts of culturable land. The Gonds dug no tanks or wells, planted no groves, gave no thought to the decoration of palace or cottage. Their *summum bonum* was a life of tranquil indolence, princes and peasants alike being fired with no ambitious idea of aggrandisement, always preferring to buy off invasion by concession rather than refer it to the arbitration of the sword. The cultivators nevertheless benefited by the unambitious policy of their Gond princes, and the districts grew rich and prosperous; until on the death of Hirde Shah the strength of the ruling house was sapped by internal

struggles, and the Marathas became masters of the country.

38. In the year 1781 the Saugor Pandits took complete possession of Mandla, making it a Subah subordinate to Jubbulpore. Their general, Moraji, who had caused the downfall of Mandla, was appointed its first ruler, and for eighteen years a succession of Maratha lieutenants was installed, culminating in the notorious Basudeo Pandit, who in eight short months succeeded in relieving the district of fifty-six lakhs of rupees. In comparison with this Oriental Verres the havoc wrought by invasions of the Pindaries paled into insignificance. As many as could save anything from the general ruin fled to Nagpur and prevailed upon the Bhonsla to take Mandla in exchange for assistance rendered by him to the Rajah of Saugor in 1799.

The Saugor Régime.

39. The district, now governed by a Subahdar from Nagpur, was in nearly as evil a plight as before. Emboldened by the absence of any strong and sovereign state in Central India the Pindaries became more and more audacious; freebooting bands ravaged the country-side, pillaging and firing the villages, and sparing neither sex nor creed; and although one of the Nagpur Subahdars, Chintaman, fortified Mandla town with an outer wall and ditch, the mass of the population in their unprotected villages was reduced to a condition of hopeless penury. This state of things continued until Mandla was ceded to the British in 1818 at the close of the Maratha war, and the Maratha garrison surrendered to General Marshall.

The Nagpur Régime.

40. From 1818 to 1835 Mandla was considered a Tahsil of Seoni, Ramgarh and Sohagpur being included in Jubbulpore district. During this period, inaugurated by a famine and epidemic of cholera, the country steadily declined in prosperity. In 1835 Mandla was made into a Munsiffi and in 1849 was promoted to the status of a district; six months later it

The British rule.

reverted to its old position, and finally in 1851 Mandla, Ramgarh, and Sohagpur were formed into the independent district of Mandla. The first officer in charge, Mr. Clark, was succeeded by Captain Waddington in 1855.

The Mutiny.

41. Shortly after Captain Waddington's appointment the Mutiny broke out. Mandla town was only slightly affected, the principal seats of rebellion being Shahpura, Ramgarh, and Sohagpur. In July 1857, a malguzar of the Mandla Pargana refused to pay Government revenue, saying that the English Raj was over. Others followed suit and four Thakurs of Sohagpur at the instigation of some mutinous sepoys of the 52nd Bengal Native Infantry Regiment began to collect men and arms. The Thana at Sohagpur was attacked and the police put to flight; the police of Shahpura also were driven in by the Lodhi Thakur of Shahpura. The rebels joined forces and marched on Mandla, looting the village of Ghugri on the way. Captain Waddington thus describes the beginning of the campaign: "On arrival "at Mandla I pushed forward a small body of police to Ramnagar, a village ten miles away towards Ramgarh, and on "the 26th October they attacked a small party of rebels "about four miles off, and killed two, wounded one, and "captured one; but hearing that a large body were coming "down to attack Ramnagar the police retired to Mandla. "Having thus succeeded in our first brush with the rebels, "on 28th October I sent out two parties to attack them at "Ghugri; on the preceding day the outpost at Bichchea "was driven in, and on the following day the Thana of "Narayanganj in the Jubbulpore District—thus cutting off "my communication with Jubbulpore and Raipur. But on "31st October the police, led on by Devi Parshad, Tahsil-"dar of Mandla, attacked and drove in the rebel post at "Ghugri, and I began to feel hopeful of the result of "my small operations." Things then went badly for a while, and Captain Waddington decided to concentrate his

forces in Mandla town. "On 5th November I moved "everything into the town, and strengthened its fortifica- "tions, intending to hold out to the last. I also established "a cordon of small guards at the villages nearest to the "town to give immediate notice of the enemy's approach, "but until the 23rd November the rebels contented them- "selves with plundering villages at a distance of about ten "miles from Mandla. On that day they suddenly appeared "at the village of Khairi, one mile from Mandla ...... "during the night they kept up a continual shouting and "occasionally fired off their matchlocks, evidently with the "view of making us think that they were going to attack "the town. Next day reserving the 52nd Sepoys as a stand- "by I sent out all the available police amounting to 33 "musketeers and 17 matchlocksmen to reconnoitre, with "orders to attack, if they thought themselves strong "enough, but if not, to retire. But the rebels perceiving "their approach, the action commenced, and soon the greater "part of the police came running back, reporting the rebels "to be in great force. There was however no help for it, "and I allowed the 52nd men to advance. At this critical "moment the enemy were about 400 yards from the "town, but a rifle shot dropping amongst their foremost "skirmishers, simultaneously with the rush of the 52nd "Sepoys now joined by the police, the tide of battle turned "and the rebels fled."

The enemy however were not broken, and two more rebel forces were approaching, one from the direction of Jubbulpore, the other from the south-east. Moreover Captain Waddington suspected treachery in the town, and decided to evacuate it, leaving it to the mercy of the rebels. They however dared not gratify their avarice and loot the place, as a certain Babuji Ojha, a Brahman of great sanctity and conversant with all the black arts, was supposed to be within the walls, and no one dared to break upon his devotions. On 15th January Captain Waddington re-

turned to Mandla, and after waiting two months for reinforcements moved on Ghugri, which was taken on 31st March 1858, and thence to Ramgarh. It was important to capture this place, as it was from here that the Mandla rebellion had originated, the wife of the imbecile Rajah being the moving cause. Captain Waddington continues: "The town of Ramgarh is perched on a high mound rising, "as it were, out of a dead level plain, the sides of the "mound on three sides being so abrupt that to ascend "them steps were cut in various places, while on the "fourth side, and furthest from us as we approached, the "slope is scarcely perceptible, and extends about half a "mile to the foot of a very steep hill. Leaving our baggage "on the plain out of range of the enemy's Zamboruks, and "under a strong guard, we moved forward to attack the "town, our object being to reach the slope to the rear, and "prevent the egress of the rebels in that direction. To "accomplish this Lieutenants Barton and Cockburn proceeded with the Nagpur Irregulars and some half a dozen "police sowars to the right, while I took the 52nd men and "my police with the Zamboruks to the left. On my party "arriving parallel to the town, we perceived the Rebels "streaming over the slope and making for the hill as "quickly as they could . . . . . . I could do nothing but "hasten their departure by throwing some Zamboruk balls "amongst them, an attention to which they responded "until they finally disappeared over the top of the hill." He then entered the town and occupied the Rajah's house, a strong loop-holed building, which, if defended, would have been almost impregnable to the forces arrayed against it. Seven days later a general action took place in front of the town, and the rebels were defeated with a loss of 25 men and a considerable quantity of guns and ammunition. Shahpura capitulated on the approach of the loyal forces, the rebel army having fled, and the defenders of Sohagpur, disappointed to find that a force, which they were expecting from Rewah,

had elected to fight on the side of the British, surrendered at the first blow. The Rani of Ramgarh in imitation of Durgawati stabbed herself to avoid capture, and the mutiny in Mandla came to a sudden end. The Sohagpur Taluk was handed over to the Maharajah of Rewah in gratitude for his services in the Mutiny, though it would be interesting to know on what side the Rewah contingent would have fought, if the British had happened to fail at the Fort of Ramgarh. The *ubari* tenures of Ramgarh and Shahpura were confiscated, the family of the rebel Rajah of Ramgarh being granted a small pension at the expense of the cultivators, who had joined in the revolt. The mutiny over the district settled down to a peaceful and contented existence, until the famine of 1897, catching the people unawares, reduced the more backward tracts once again to a state of penury. Its evil effects however rapidly wore off, and the present century has ushered in a new era of prosperity.

ARCHÆOLOGY.

Kakarramath Temples.

42. Mandla District is by no means rich in monuments of her former greatness; the oldest archæological remains are the ruins of the Kakarramath temples in Dindori Tahsil. The buildings are very badly preserved, and as they have been turned into a repository for images from all the neighbouring shrines, it is difficult to say in whose honour they were originally built.* Of the five temples that once stood there only one survives; it is built of hewn stone without mortar, and like the other ruins is probably the work of Jains, a community of whom used to live in the neighbourhood. There is a number of finely carved images lying near it belonging to the Hindu and Jain religions, which are probably not the work of local sculptors but were introduced from Rajputana. Various explanations are given of the name Kakarramath; one is that some Pandwas, who were living

* This is an extract from the note of Mr. Blakiston, of the Archæological Survey, dated 2nd May 1912.



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

TEMPLE AT KUKARRAMATH.

in the neighbourhood, were suddenly called away to repel a raid from Rewah State, and built the temples in a single night. Leaving at cockcrow next morning they gave the name of Kakarramath to the scene of their nightly labours. Another story is that a Banjara built them in memory of a faithful dog. He had apparently left a bag of money at this spot and as he was proceeding on his journey was tripped up by his dog, who refused to let him pass. In anger he struck the animal, which had just enough strength to limp back to the place where the money was lying. The Banjara becoming interested followed the dog and found it breathing its last over the bag of money. In an agony of remorse—for Banjaras are notoriously devoted to their dogs—he built the temple in honour of so striking an example of canine fidelity.*

Sacred Stones.

43. In the Motinala Range there are some sacred stones, of which one at Khalondi represents the form of a woman with a calf in her lap. At Neosa a number of such stones exists, representing bullocks pointing in different directions, all of which are objects of the greatest venerations to the Gaolis, who bring their herds to pasture in the rich grazing lands of the neighbourhood. As sculptural works however they have no merit.

Gond relics.

44. The only important Gond relics are the palace at Ramnagar and the fort of Mandla. The palace was built by Rajah Hirde Shah about the year 1630 A.D., when he made Ramnagar his capital. Of architectural beauty it is entirely innocent, being a thick-set, ugly building altogether lacking in ornament or grace; its only claim to distinction is that it enjoys one of the finest views of the river Nerbudda that can be imagined. It has three stories with a central court, and is divided into a large number of rooms for the accom-

* Another account of the building of the temple is given in the Appendix under "Kakarramath."

modation of the Raja's seraglio, which was said to number one hundred in the days of Hirde Shah. It also contains the one lithic record left us by the Gonds, an entirely unreliable genealogical tree of the Garha-Mandla dynasty. The date of the building of Mandla Fort is not accurately known, but the palace within it was made by Narind Shah about the end of the seventeenth century. Unfortunately hardly any ruins even remain of it, as the materials were carried away by masons for building the town of Mandla. The outer wall of the fort was built by the Bhonsla's lieutenant, Chintaman, at the beginning of the last century. This and the moat were constructed to protect the town against the freebooting raids of the Pindaries, and to give an asylum to the villagers around. Nowadays the palace has disappeared, the wall has been breached, and the moat choked with debris. There still remain however a number of ghats and temples on the banks of the Nerbudda, which though of no peculiar merit in themselves bear testimony to the glory of old Gondwana.

CHAPTER III.

POPULATION.

STATISTICS OF POPULATION.

Statistics of Population.

45. The area of Mandla district is 5,089 square miles and in the year 1911 the population amounted to 405,234 persons, or 79 per square mile. The district is almost evenly divided into two Tahsils, Mandla and Dindori, the populations of which are 222,169 and 183,065 respectively. Mandla Tahsil is the more thickly populated, the density being 88 persons as compared with 73 persons to the square mile in Dindori. The average density of the rural area is 80 per square mile, but it varies considerably from tract to tract; in the closely cultivated, double cropped "garden" of Mandla it is as much as 211 per square mile. The district can boast of only one town, Mandla, which has a population of 9,379. It is impossible to state definitely the number of villages; for the aboriginal is by nature a nomad, and a site, that this year is thronged with peaceful and contented cultivators, may twelve months hence be abandoned to the jackal and the kite. The district now contains 2,127 villages, of which 575 are ryotwari, 112 Forest-villages, and six are included in the Baiga Chak. Five villages contain more than 2,000 inhabitants; the largest is Nainpur with 3,383, Shahpura follows with 2,682, then Bamhni with 2,388, Hirdenagar with 2,280, and Pindrai with 2,160. Bamhni, Pindrai and Shahpura each contain about 520 houses. Nainpur is a rising place, as it has latterly been made the head-quarters of a Bengal-Nagpur Railway district. Bungalows, engine-sheds, and godowns are springing up like mushrooms, and the population will soon show a still more rapid increase. Pindrai is also a trade centre of some importance on the railway, but the growth of Nainpur is likely

to reduce its markets. The district contains 403 villages with a population of less than 100 persons each.

Variation in Population.

46. As regards variation in population, any census taken before the year 1872 is too unreliable to be worth consideration. In January 1872 a thorough census was taken, from which it appears that the population of the whole District was 213,052 persons, Mandla Tahsil containing 129,328, and Dindori 83,724 inhabitants. By the year 1881 these figures had increased to 301,377 for the District, 170,535 and 130,842 for Mandla and Dindori Tahsils respectively. The accuracy of census work was still rather doubtful, as the wilder forest tribes seemed to take a malicious delight in confounding the operations, and could not be tracked down with any degree of success. In the decade 1881-1891 the district waxed fat and prosperous; cultivators thronged to take up land and the population increased by as many as 10,000 persons. The decade that followed brought with it a succession of bad crops, scarcities and famines. Where all the crops had perished, there was no demand for agricultural labour, and many an able-bodied farmer had to leave his homestead and seek employment in another district. The census of 1901 shows a decrease of 22,000, the home Tahsil numbering only 178,752 and Dindori 139,629 inhabitants. A few years however saw the exiles back again, and with them came a number of other agriculturists, to take up the land that was to be had almost for the asking in the less fertile parts of the district. In 1911 the census returns show the prodigious increase of 27 per cent. on those of 1901. The whole District contained 405,234, Mandla Tahsil 222,169, and Dindori 183,065 inhabitants.

Births and deaths.

47. For the decade ending with the year 1911 the birth-rate in Mandla is recorded as nearly 45 per mille of population. The death-rate for the same period was 26 per mille. Compared

with the rest of the Province this is a fairly good proportion; the figures for this decade have not yet been published, but in the year 1904, which was an average year, the births and deaths per mille for the whole Province were 53 and 31, those of Mandla 59 and 25 respectively.

Disease.

48. Owing to the wide stretches of forest, which cover more than a third of the area of the district, malaria is very rife, especially in the low-lying tracts, which contain hyperindemic centres of the disease. In the more open tracts, such as Nainpur, Bamhni and Anjania in the south-west, where the forests are small and sparse, and cultivation predominates, malaria is not nearly so common or dangerous, and the general health of the inhabitants is far superior. In all the northern and central parts malaria is hyperindemic, and also in the Banjar and Motinala Reserves, which enjoy so evil a reputation that the Forest officials usually put in a strong protest against being posted to those fever-haunted localities. Probably the least affected spot is Mandla town, although in the rainy season it is surrounded on all sides by water. Malaria begins to make its malign influence felt about the middle of July, reaching its zenith in August and September, after which it gradually declines, normal conditions being reached about February or March. The smaller the rain-fall, the freer the district is of malaria. The spring and hot weather months are extremely healthy.

Cholera.

49. Fortunately enough, cholera is a comparatively rare visitor to the district; when it does come, it is usually imported by pilgrims, especially by those who hail from Puri, Gaya or Benares. In the great famine of 1897, when the mass of the population had ruined their health by an unwholesome diet of leaves, roots and toadstools, the disease, introduced by some starving wanderer from another district, spread like wild-fire over the country side, and the death rate was appalling. Owing to wise precautions of

the Deputy Commissioner the famine of 1900 was practically free from cholera. In the last decade there have been three epidemics, occurring in the years 1906, 1908, and 1910. The first attack fell more on the town than on the District, and the deaths numbered 547. In 1908 there were 276 victims, and in 1910 as many as 656, of which 133 occurred in the town. It appears to be most rife when the mango crop is most plentiful, or when a full flood of the Nerbudda has filled the river with rotten fish. There can be little doubt that the river, from which the townspeople draw their water, is the ordinary channel, through which infection comes and is transferred.

Smallpox.

50. As regards smallpox, Mandla like every other district in the Province, is never entirely free from the disease, though severe epidemics are rare. In 1907, however, it got a firm grip of the district, the death roll reaching the high figure of 837. Owing to the great increase in vaccination smallpox is less of a visitation than it used to be, as may be seen from the death-rate of the last four years (1908-1911), when the number of victims was 151, 5, 10 and 26 respectively. Eleven vaccinators tour the district, and vaccination is on the whole well received by the lower classes. In Shahpura however which is a large and prosperous village chiefly inhabited by well-to-do Hindus, a strong prejudice prevails against vaccination, and it is hard work to make headway against the crass stupidity of the semi-educated. The absence of roads and rapid means of transport greatly hampers the work, as the vaccinators are compelled to prepare their own lymph.

Fever.

51. The average mortality from fever during the decade 1901-11 was 14·49 per mille, or 6,017 deaths annually. The fever is generally malarial, but the village Kotwar, whose duty it is to report the deaths in his village, has a very rudimentary notion of the distinction between various kinds of fever,

and many curious complaints are probably recorded under this all-embracing heading. The worst year in the decade was 1907, when 7,741 deaths from fever were recorded, and the lightest year was 1901 when the figures reached little more than 4,000. The majority of cases occur in forest villages or at settlements near the foot of ghats.

Other Diseases.

52. Dysentery and diarrhœa, brought on by exposure and sudden climatic changes, are responsible for a large proportion of the casualties. The annual number of deaths from this cause is generally over 600, and in 1908 it rose to 716. The district is very free from Lathyrism caused by the eating of *tiura* (*Lathyrus sativus*). Very little land is cultivated with *tiura*, and that only for the sake of the cattle. Only one case of such paralysis has come to the notice of the Civil Surgeon; the victim was an immigrant from Seoni and stated that he had eaten "*tiura dal*" in that district. Leprosy is very uncommon; the Civil Surgeon writes "in the course of three and a half years I have seen in all about a score of lepers," but in addition to these there is a lepers' asylum at Patparra with twenty-one inmates, under the supervision of the Church Missionary Society. Blindness is not infrequent, being generally a case of corneal opacity caused by purulent ophthalmia, which has received no treatment. Another common cause of blindness is senile cataract, which can be relieved by operation in the Dispensary; but few care to avail themselves of this privilege.

Plague.

53. Mandla has been very lucky in escaping many of the plague epidemics, that almost annually crop up in the Central Provinces. From 1901 to the beginning of 1907 the number of cases amounted in all to 101, but in 1907 a small epidemic broke out in the district, keeping clear of Mandla town and causing a death roll of 276. In 1911 however a severe epidemic occurred, introduced probably from Nainpur. Prompt steps were taken to eradicate the disease, but 1,304 persons

succumbed before it was finally stamped out. Inoculation was at first received with some misgivings, but after a while became fairly popular with the educated portion of the population. In that year nearly 4,000 persons were inoculated, chiefly owing to the exertions of the Deputy Commissioner and Civil Surgeon.

Accidents.

54. The configuration of the district can almost be said to encourage the occurrence of accidents and sudden death. Instead of the wide, spacious plains of the North, we have here small patches of cultivation fenced in by impenetrable jungles, and many a wayfarer pursuing his lonely way from village to village has fallen a victim to the terrors that stalk by night. During the eight years 1898 to 1905, when the man-eating tigers of Sakke took toll of the travellers on the Raigarh road, the tale of deaths from wild beasts rose to the high figure of 133 one year and 144 in another. The killing of the man-eaters in 1905 brought the reign of terror to an end, and since that time the number of deaths from wild beasts and snakes averages at just over 100 per annum.

Language.

55. Omitting the dialects introduced by foreigners into Mandla the language of the district, as spoken by 300,000 of its inhabitants is a form of Eastern Hindi, known as Gondwani or Mandlaha. It is closely related to Bagheli or Rewai, the language spoken in Baghelkhand and Chota Nagpur, which is also a dialect of Eastern Hindi. The literature of this tongue is scanty, though the Maharajas of Rewah in times past were well-known patrons of the arts. One of them, Neja Ram, is said to have given a lakh of rupees for a single verse to the poet Hari Nath, and another Maharajah, Bishwanath Singh, who reigned 1813-1834, was himself an author of no small merit. The most striking difference between this tongue and ordinary Hindi is the termination of the infinitive which is—*an*, and of the third person singular of the past tense which is—*is*. The expression "he began to say" would

be translated, *kahān lagīs*. The first person suffix of the past tense is—*ō*, the second person—*ē*. The past participle ends—*e*, as for instance *kare*, done and *gaye*, gone. The sign of the genitive is *ker*, that of the dative *ke*, or *la*, as in Chattisgarhi. "What?" is *ka*, and "anyone," *koi* or *kohi*. The words "He answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandments" is thus translated into the vernacular:—"U āpan dādā-lā jabāb dis kī dēkh! ham itnā baras-se tumhār sēwa karat-rahō, and kadhi tumhār hukum nahīn tāro."

How close this is to the Chattisgarhi, which is spoken by a few thousands in the south-east of the district can be seen from the Chattisgarhi version of the same words:—

"Wō-har apan dadā-kā jawāb dihis, dēkh! mai atek bachar-le tor naukri bajāye hau au tōr kahe bāhir kab-hū nahin bhāyau."

The original language of Mandla is Gondi. It is now spoken by only 95,000 persons, but in former years it used to be the mother tongue of an immense tract of country stretching over Central India. It is practically confined to the plateau of the Central Provinces, from Wardha in the west to Mandla in the east. Gondi, which is a Dravidian tongue, is peculiar in having only two genders, masculine and neuter; the former is used for men and gods, while all other nouns are neuter. The plural suffix is *k* or *ng*, which is akin to the *nga* of Tamil dialects. "I" is *mammat* and "thou" is *imma* in Gondi. It is curious that the Gondi numerals do not go higher than seven; and to express a higher figure they have to borrow from the Aryan language. The Gondi of Mandla is generally called *Chaurasi ki boli* from the alleged fact that it was once spoken everywhere in the Ghugri estate of eighty-four (*chaurasi*) villages. A Gondi version of the sentence translated above is herewith given:—

"Or javab sisī (giving) apno dādān ittur (said), Nura! mammat ichchō (so many) barshāngnāl nīva tahal (service)

kiyātōnā, ani bappore niva hukumtun nille (never) tārē-kiyōn."

Among the other languages that are met with in the district Marathi is spoken by 635 persons, and Banjara or gipsy speech by 771. The latter however is on the decrease as the number of Banjaras is falling with the introduction of roads and cart-traffic.

Names of places.

56. A large number of Mandla villages have received their names from the particular species of tree which is most prolific in their neighbourhood. In this category may be classed the many Harras and Harratolas, whose names are derived from the *harra* tree*, Piparia from the *pīpur*, Amagaon from *ām*, the mango, Kosamdongri from the *kosum*, Banrasaj from the *sāj*, Tendukhera from the *tendu*, and others such as Pakri, Umarwara, Rai, Barkhera, Bansa and Sarai. The Gondi word "dongur" means generally a jungle on a hill side; from it are derived names like Chiraidongri, Dongaria, Bhimdongri, and Kawadongri (the hill of crows). The ordinary Gondi word for hill top is "dadar," from which places like Chauradadar and Deoridadar received their names. The district contains two or three Patparas, which is an onomatopæic word. Such places are strewn with a number of loose stones, or else have patches of solid rock cropping up in the path ways, and the word *patpara* represents the clatter made by a horse's hoofs, as it trots over the stone. Gondi names are found in close proximity to Hindu words; just as in England two names like Whitby and Newcastle bear evidence to the presence at sometime or other of two different peoples, so it is with Mandla, where the two villages of Gopalpur and Dadargaon, lying within a few miles of each other, mark the meeting place of Aryan and Dravidian.

* Harra (Terminalia chebula), pipur (Ficus religiosa), ām (Mangifera indica), kosum (Schleichera trijuga), saj (Terminalia tomentosa), tendu (Diospyros Melanoxylon), pakri (Ficus infectoria), umar (Ficus glomerata), bar (Ficus bengalensis), bansa (Albizzia odoratissima), sarai (sal or Shorea robusta).

In connection with village nomenclature the Baigas relate a curious story. A certain Sarwan had ordered his wife to treat his old, blind parents with the same care and kindness as himself, but discovered one day that, whereas she fed him and herself with *nirmal khir* (pure milk, rice and sugar), she was in the habit of giving the inferior food of *maheri* (rice and curds) to his parents. As soon as he had realised the deception he picked up a stick to teach her better manners, but she snatching at some *kudai* (kodon porridge), which was lying in a basket, and a large spoon (*chatwa*) took to her heels. When she was struggling up a steep hill the man began to gain on her, and she had to throw away the *kudai*, from which the name of that place is now known as Kudaidadar. A little further on she had to lighten her load again, and threw away her basket (*daori*), thus giving a name to Daoridadar. Her *chatwa* or spoon went next at Chatwapat, but Sarwan finally caught her up and cut off her breast at Chichimatta. Further on, at "Benipat" he cut off her hair, and lastly at "Naktigatia", her nose. Another place, Chotikhai "the rat's hole" was so named because on one occasion, when the great god Bhagwan had assembled all the world to banquet them, a rat ran across the board, was pursued by the Gonds, and disappeared into the earth at Chotikhai. When they returned from their fruitless chase, they found that nearly all the food had been eaten in their absence. They were therefore compelled to mix a quantity of water with the fragments that remained, to make it go round among them all ; ever since that day the Gonds have always mixed water with their grain to make the *pej* or porridge, which is their usual food.

57. Of the total population of 405,234 as many as 328,573 or 81 per cent. are employed, or find their livelihood, in agriculture. In this number are included 1473 persons, who do not themselves put hand to a plough, but live on the rents of their

Occupations.

estates. Ordinary cultivators number 246,044 or 60 per cent. of the whole and farm servants 80,877, of whom considerably more than half are women. An occupation of some importance in this district is that of pan growing. The number of villages containing pan-gardens is only four, but they are of considerable size and provide a means of livelihood for nearly a thousand persons. Cattle breeding and pasturing are the occupations of more than 14,000, wood-cutting of 1219, fishing of 2659 and hunting of 101. Mandla has no special manufacturing industry. About one per cent. of the population is engaged in cotton weaving, and another one per cent. in preparing raw timber for the market. Workers in iron, brass, bell and other metals, together with potters and tile-makers make up another one per cent. A few more than 5500 persons are engaged in transport, of which 809 follow the profession of pack-bullock drivers. Public administration, including police, municipal servants, village watchmen, and others, is a means of livelihood to nearly 10,000 or 2½ per cent. Domestic servants, both outdoor and indoor, number only 1700, the lowest figure in the Province. Of medical practitioners with their dependants the total is 199, again the lowest figure in the Province; considerably more than 50 per cent. of these are vaccinators, compounders, or midwives. Education provides employment for 244 persons and a means of livelihood to another 313; and more than 2000 follow religious callings.

RELIGION.

Statistics.

58. According to the figures shown in the last Census the Hindus of Mandla number 155,006, the Animists 242,261, Mohammadans 6342, Christians 871, and other sects 752 persons. The Animists, who consist chiefly of Gonds and other aboriginal tribes, form the large proportion of 59 per cent. in spite of the fact that now-a-days better class Gonds are making great efforts to divorce themselves from

the faith of their fathers and take to the more fashionable Hindu creed. So vigorously have they adopted Hindu practices that some of them even wash the wood with which their food is to be cooked. There remain however many thousands of orthodox Animists, unsophisticated men who live in the backwoods and find their God in nature.

59. The religion of the Gonds in its orthodox form is purely animistic. Their Great God is Baradeo, whom they worship as the pervading spirit of Nature and the woods; once in three years, when the crops are specially good and the cultivators are well off, they hold a great religious congress in Baradeo's honour; several villages gather together, and a pig is sacrificed to the god, while they themselves make merry with the wassail bowl. Liquor is an essential in all the religious ceremonies of the Gonds, and the man who cannot occasionally drink himself helpless is considered to be a poor creature. They also have a pantheon which includes Dulha Deo, Narayan Deo, Suraj Deo, Mata Mai, Khair Mata, Thakur Deo, Ghansham Deo, and Bagheswar, the last of whom, being propitiated with goats and chickens, protects his devotees from tiger and renders them fearless in the jungle. Thakur Deo is particularly the god of the household, and, being omnipresent, is not given a local habitation or represented by an image. Captain Ward, the Settlement Officer of 1868, tells of how in a certain village he once came across a fragment of a roughly forged chain, which was invested with divine powers by the villagers. The divine presence in it was manifested by the fact that the chain had the power of voluntary movement, and occasionally shifted itself to a '*ber*' tree, to a stone under the tree, or to the bed of a neighbouring nallah. The Gonds were much amazed to see Captain Ward pick up and examine their Deo without incurring his immediate vengeance. The Gonds are wonderfully superstitious, and people the forests with innumerable spirits of evil character,

The Gond Religion.

to propitiate which they erect "*pats*" in spots selected by themselves or their ancestors, and there perform certain sacrificial rites. The "*pats*" may be a bamboo with a piece of rag tied to the end, a heap of stones, or perhaps only a few pieces of rag tied on to the branches of a tree; there the Gond thinks the spirit has taken up his abode and, when he is celebrating some family festivity, he is careful to let the spirit share in the merry-making.

The Baiga Religion.

60. Aboriginal like the Gonds, the Baigas too are animists in their religion, but the higher sub-tribes have to a certain extent overlaid their own creed with a veneer of Hinduism. The principal deity of their Pantheon is Baradeo, the spirit of their native Forest, and the saj tree (*Terminalia tomentosa*) is sacred as his dwelling place. No more solemn oath can be taken by an aboriginal than that which he swears by the saj tree twig. The month of May is devoted to the worship of Baradeo, when offerings are made of goats and fowls and new mahua liquor. The necessity for the latter is often brought forward as an excuse for illicit distillation, as the worshippers say that the god will have nothing to do with contractor's liquor. The other principal deities are Narayan Deo, the Sun, Dharti Mata, the Earth, and Thakur Deo, her husband, whose special charge is the protection of the village. Thakur Deo must also be worshipped before the sowings can commence. In the beginning of Asarh a certain ceremony known as the Asandhi Puja or Bidri is observed. Every cultivator, Baiga or Gond alike, gives the Baiga priest a handful of each kind of the grain he intends to sow; these are mixed together, a small portion sown beneath the tree sacred to Thakur Deo, a small portion returned to the cultivator for sowing in the centre of his field, and the balance becomes the perquisite of the priest. In the worship of Narayan Deo, the sun god, a pig is sacrificed with the most revolting cruelty to the accompaniment of a sacrificial hymn. If propitiated, however, he will protect the worship-

pers from the terrors of the jungle, the tiger, or snake, or other enemy of man. The Baigas are as superstitious as the Gonds and people the forests with spirits, good and bad, to whom they set up *pats* or shrines for worship. Nails are driven into trees year after year to nail in the evil spirits; and the tigers of the Banjar Reserve are said to be harmless, until one of them has extracted a nail which has been driven into a famous mahua tree, now heavily scored with tiger's claws. If a man has been killed by a tiger, the jungle in which the affair took place is considered most dangerous until the ghost of the dead man has been laid; for the ghost rides on the head of the tiger and incites him to further deeds of blood, at the same time making him more wary and watchful against possible attack. A subscription is therefore levied in the village in the limits of which the man was killed, and the Baiga medicine man purchases the drugs and potions of his art: two fowls, a little ghi, rice and turmeric. These he offers at the nearest *pat*, and then repairs to the exact spot in the forest where the man was killed, goes through a course of tiger-like gestures, collects the dead man's chattels, and eats a little of the bloodstained earth. If this does not succeed in laying the man's ghost, the tiger will within eight days kill the Baiga, who performed the ceremony. The origin of this theory seems to be that if the tiger has not removed his evil spirit to another jungle, he is certain to kill the Baiga when engaged in the long and tedious purificatory ceremony. The villagers can thus tell by the fate of the Baiga priest whether the tiger is still in his old haunts or has moved to pastures new.

Sickness and its Worship.

61. The use of herbs and simples is still in its infancy, among the aboriginal tribes, although the Baigas are said to have some knowledge of them; at the first appearance of sickness a "gunia" (exorciser) is sent for, entertained, and given a goat or pig or hen, and liquor with which to exorcise the evil spirit. Should any one happen to die of

cholera in a village, all the inhabitants leave at once for the jungle, and ask the Baiga medicine man to supplicate the adverse deities on their behalf. The Baiga charges about Rs. 10 for the goats, pigs, chickens and liquor, which he uses to propitiate Thakur Deo and Khair Mata, and when the ceremony is finished he sends word to the villagers that they may now return in safety. In any case of sickness, whether to man or cattle, the custom is on some fixed day to decorate a hen's egg with *geru* (red chalk) and charcoal, place it on a small wooden cart built specially for the purpose and leave it with the inevitable offering of liquor on some road eastward of the village. This is called "*Tar Pawna*" and in order to complete the ceremony each woman takes a broken broom, a broken basket and some dirt, and throws them in the same place. The disease is thus expelled in effigy from the village. The Baigas have a method of propitiating "Marahi Deo," the divine personification of cholera, in order to prevent the disease coming into their village from other places. They contribute money enough to buy six hens of different colours and a *jawad* (pig). The Dewar or medicine man then places himself in the midst of the *abadi*, feeds the hens and pig with kodai, rice and urad dal, and drives them out beyond the village boundary, whereupon all danger of an epidemic vanishes.

Popular superstitions.

62. The forest tribes set great store by omens, particularly in connection with their cultivation. From the rainfall in the month of Jeth (June) they say they can foretell the nature of the rains, just as the English farmer could foretell the weather for forty days by what happened on St. Swithin's Day. They take four clods from a black-soil field and name them after the months Asadh, Sawan, Bhadon and Kunwar*. After going through some dedicatory ceremony they place a red earthen pot full of water on the four clods, and leave them for the night. Next morning they examine the clods; if all are equally wet, the rainfall will be

* July, August, September, October.

equally good in all the four months, but if one or two are less wet than the others, the rainfall in these particular months will be inferior. Another way of foretelling the rainfall is to examine the nest of the partridge "Titar," which lays four eggs in Jeth. If the four eggs are touching each other the rains will be good, but if they lie apart, the rains will be scanty and the crop outturn very poor. The Baigas or rather such of them as have taken to ordinary cultivation have a curious superstition that if, when they are taking out their plough cattle to the fields, they meet a man carrying an empty black coloured earthen jar, their crop will be a failure, but if the jar be full, they will have a full harvest. They are very particular about the creatures they may happen to meet on the road. If, for instance, one of the unlucky animals, such as a snake, jackal, fox, cat or hare crosses the path in front of them, they say "*gali kat gaya*" "my road is cut" and have to place a piece of stick or straw cross-ways over the track of the animal before they can proceed. Every traveller however takes it as a good omen to see a person carrying flowers or fish or milk, a corpse being carried out, a mongoose, a bluejay or woman carrying a baby. If a man on his way to some high festival such as a marriage happens to meet a woman carrying a pot of water, he puts himself in the way of great good fortune by dropping a pice into the water. Should he happen to be of a lower caste than the woman, she has to throw away the jar; hence it is customary to drop in the water double the value of the jar, or a rupee, or in some cases as much as a gold mohur. The usual superstitions prevail about sneezing, yawning, stretching, and winking. As regards the building of a house, the main door must not face the south, the region of Yama, the god of Death, or the west, which is the direction of the setting sun, though a Mussalman's house should face south or west, that he may always look out towards Mecca. The eaves should be lower at the front than at the back, that is, *gai-mukh* or cow-mouthed, as opposed to *singh-mukh*, or tiger-mouthed. If the

services of an astrologer can be obtained, he has to calculate the direction in which Shesh Nag, the snake on whom the world reposes, is holding his head ; he then plants the first brick or stone to the left of that direction, because snakes and elephants turn always to the right ; the house will then be less liable to fall when Shesh-Nag moves and causes what we call an earthquake. No one should ever sit on the threshold of a house ; for that is the spot sacred to Lachmi, the goddess of wealth, who is jealous of her privileges. It is most unlucky to sweep out the house at twilight, lest Lachmi, who passes round at that time, should be displeased and curse it and its occupants.

Dasehra and other Festivals.

63. In the month of Kunwar, corresponding to October in the English Calendar, both Gonds and Baigas alike observe the festival of Dasehra. The methods of merry-making are not universally the same, but the festival is generally considered an occasion for the interchange of hospitality with other villages. The men and women of one village rise at about midnight, bathe and oil their bodies, and take a meal of kodai and dal. The men deck their heads and ears with *jagni* flowers, bind their hair with a red cloth or *chunri*, and wear bangles on their feet. The whole community then moves off in procession known as the *Saila* to another village (in the case of the Baigas, the men and women go to different villages), and at about 4 a.m. rouse up the village headman with song, dance, drums and other kinds of music. The headman sends for his villagers, who gather round and move in a circle, beating sticks with their visitors and singing a song of which the refrain is ' Nana, Nana, Nana.' The women dance round in another circle singing a song, the burthen of which is the word ' Rina ' often repeated. At noon all the people present are fed and regaled with about four rupees worth of liquor. The man who led the ' saila ' procession, is given a bullock by the headman who is 'At home,' and the visitors then

return to their village in a state of glorious intoxication. Next year the visit will be returned and a bullock presented to the headmen of the visitors. The Diwali festival held in the middle of November is common to all castes, both aboriginal and Hindu. The object of the ceremony is the worship of Lachmi, goddess of wealth; it is the date on which careful traders make up their yearly accounts, while the less thrifty light innumerable lamps, get drunk and gamble away their substance. The cattle play an important part in the merry-making as the festival was originally observed by Ahirs alone: the Baigas even go to the extent of making a particular kind of pulse, of which the first portions are distributed among the cattle before they take food themselves. The Ganesh festival, which takes place in Magh (January), is really a day of fasting; as soon however as the moon comes out, the spell is broken, and all people take food, though many will not touch anything but fruit. Among the aboriginals the Ganesh festival is really a children's holiday; the boys and girls of a village go from house to house and beg for kodai, which they cook outside the *basti*, and share with ten chosen guests. As this is a festival borrowed from Hinduism, there is no consumption of wine, for which reason no doubt it is not observed by adults. In Sawan (August) is held the Hareri festival in honour of the verdure which is beginning to appear in the fields. Other castes observe it exclusively, keeping to their family circles, but the Gonds and Baigas make it an excuse for collective feasting and jollity. The Gond gets a Bilwa leaf and twig of the Yogi Lali tree, plants them in his own fields and worships the deities with a little offering of ghi. The Baiga puts the Bilwa leaf charm on his door and not in the fields. Both communities however devote the rest of the day to a feast and drinking bout. After Hareri some time in August the Pola festival is observed in honour of Girimata; there is no feast making, but children go about on stilts (*giri*), which finally they nail to trees at the boundary

of the village, or, if possible, throw into the Nerbudda. The object of their devotions is that the crops may grow as tall as their stilts.

Holi Festival.

64. The greatest and most popular festival among the aboriginals is the Holi, which is held on the day of the first full moon in Phagun (January to February). The festival commemorates the anniversary of a day, when the goddess Holka was burnt; the worshippers therefore collect a great quantity of fuel, to which they set fire, while singing an anthology of vulgar songs. Every householder in the village, whatever his caste, is required to subscribe a faggot or two at the bidding of the revellers, and unpopular persons sometimes come in for rough treatment as the collection is being made. Red powder and coloured water is thrown around, and everybody abandons himself to a few days of unbridled license. Women wander about in bands, armed with a rope and bamboos, with which they block the way of the hapless wayfarer, and beat him until he pays his way past them. Among the Gonds a subscription is raised in the village for the purchase of liquor, and the revelry is carried far into the night.

Christians.

65. The Christian population of Mandla District numbers 871, of whom, excluding the Nainpur contingent, 29 are European and 703 Native Christians. Nainpur is increasing almost daily in size, and the Christian population is rising proportionately. The Church Missionary Society has for many years maintained a Mission in the district, and five churches have been built at Mandla, Patpara, Deori, Diwari and Marpha. Patpara contains a leper asylum with a score of leper inmates, an orphanage and a school. Boys are instructed up to the Middle Vernacular Standard, and do a certain amount of carpentry. Girls are taught sewing and domestic work. During the famine of 1897 the Mission stations did an immense amount of good in supplying and organising work,

and distributing food and money to the cultivators. Mr. Price, who was in charge at Marpha, also successfully combated a great cholera epidemic. A German Lutheran Mission once entered the district and toured through it, but the Missionaries came with no proper provisions or regard for their health, and those that did not die in the fever-stricken jungles of Dindori, only just succeeded in making their way back to Jubbulpore through Shahpura. A mission has lately been opened at Tikaria from Jubbulpore, but up till now no progress has been made. All the Mandla Christians belong to the Church of England with the exception of 54 persons in Nainpur, who are Roman Catholics.

CASTES.

Principal Castes.

66. Aboriginal castes*, mainly of course Gonds, number over half the total population of the district; and the other principal castes are the quasi-aboriginal or low-caste Hindus who alone settle with any freedom amongst Gonds. Seven per cent. are Ahirs; Baigas, Pankhas and Mahras each number four per cent., and Telis and Dhimars three per cent. Brahmans, Kurmis, Lodhis, Chamars and Mussalmans make up only one per cent. of the total. The Gonds however have lost the predominance as landowners, which they once held under the Garha-Mandla dynasty; they now possess only 144 villages, and are still losing ground. The principal landowners are Brahmans, Lodhis and Banias, who together own 921 villages, while Mussalmans, excluding the lately dissolved Dei estate of 35 villages, own only 45, and Kurmis 50 villages. The best cultivators are Kurmis, Lodhis, the gardening castes (Kachis, Malis, and Marars), and the Rathor Telis. Some Hindus doubtless made their way into the district at an early period, but the main portion of the Hindu element in the population dates from the middle

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* The description of the Gonds, Baigas and Dhobas is from a manuscript note of Mr. Bell, the Settlement Officer.

of the 17th century, when the enlightened Rajah, Hirde Shah, adopted the policy of colonising with Hindu immigrants the richer portions round Mandla, the principal taluka of which is now called Hirdenagar in honour of him.

Gonds.

67. The Gonds number just over half the total population, and own 144 villages, or one-tenth of the malguzari total. At one time they were very much more prominent as a land-owning caste, but their ignorance and simplicity, combined with a naturally indolent and pleasure-loving temperament, have rendered them a very easy prey to the educated cunning and intelligence of Hindu aggression. Even the more honest and straightforward Hindus seem to think the simplicity of the Gond a fair mark; and the more disreputable class of adventurous Kalars, Mohammadans and others, who have from time to time found their way into the district, have in their dealings with the Gonds as often as not descended to depths of villainy which, if Justice had her own, would have given the gaols more work to do. The old story of Esau, substituting the Kalar and the wine-bottle for Jacob and his mess of pottage, has had its frequent counterpart. Forgery has been found to be a simple matter, where the victim is a pleasure-loving and improvident aboriginal, who cannot even sign his name; and there are villages which have passed from aboriginal to non-aboriginal owners without the parties to the transfer having so much as met. It is possible to quote one instance, in which a disreputable non-aboriginal still holds a village secured by personation and perjury, for which he actually served a term of imprisonment. With all their faults the Gonds are, for a Gond tenantry, the most satisfactory landlords in this district; they alone are at all in sympathy with their caste-fellows, and are straight-forward and honest in their dealings with them. Even the remnant of Gond proprietors still left, who represent the principle of

the survival of the fittest, are sadly at the mercy of every swindler who comes along; and it is probable that nothing can stop the gradual process of expropriation of a distinctly amiable class of proprietors, which still goes steadily on, except some drastic form of legislation. There appears to be little reason why freedom of contract should be regarded as a sacrosanct principle, where its effects are so one-sided as they are here; aboriginal villages should be made non-transferable except in virtue of a genuine transaction entered into by both parties in the presence of the head of the District. The Gonds consider themselves antochthonous, and Mandla has from time immemorial been their habitat and the area, to which *par excellence* the Mohammadans applied the term Gondwana. The bulk of the Mandla Gonds are known as Rawanbansis, that is, belonging to the family of the Diwan Rawan, who was slain by Rama. In its origin the term is probably derogatory, like the term Nagbansi, applied to the Gonds of the Southern Satpuras; but it now carries with it no opprobrious signification amongst the Gonds themselves, by whom it has been freely accepted.

Raj Gonds.

68. Besides the Rawanbansis however there are a certain number of Raj Gonds, who may be taken to be the descendants of the old landed proprietors. In appearance and character many of these have little to distinguish them from the common herd, from which no doubt they are from time to time reinforced. In their observances they are, however, often more Hindu than the Brahmans; they wear the *janeo* or sacred thread and are much more careful in their habits and purificatory ceremonies.

Endogamous Divisions of Gonds, Pardhans or Patharis.

69. Besides the Gonds proper, a number of endogamous occupational groups have come into existence. Of these, the principal, and in Mandla practically the only group, are the Patharis or Pardhans, who are the professional bards and beggars;

they are a semi-criminal caste settled mainly along the Rewah border, where in past times two police posts were instituted to look after them; but they are also found scattered all over the district.

Agarias.

70. In the East of the district in the neighbourhood of the Baiga Chak, there are a few Agarias, or iron smelters, who still ply their trade on the most primitive lines, and whose excellent iron has a somewhat more than local reputation. The Agarias claim to have been born before the world came into being. When the fabric of the universe was created, the question of food arose, and, the boar's offer to plough with his tusks being refused, the buffalo agreed to pull a plough, provided a plough-share was made. Application was therefore made to the Agarias, the first-born, who forged a plough-share, since when they have ever made smelting their occupation. There are also scattered about a few Ojhas, or soothsayers, Dhulias or players on the *dhol* or drum, and Nagarchis or kettle-drummers. All these occupational groups, though usually by Hindus classed as Gonds, are in reality separate castes on a lower social plane even than the Gonds; they may eat from the hand of a Gond, who will not however return the compliment: they are sometimes able to give their daughters in marriage to Gonds, but cannot marry a Gond woman.

Exogamous Divisions of Gonds.

71. The exogamous divisions of the Gonds are somewhat complicated. The primary classification is by the number of gods worshipped. The worshippers of seven, six, five, and four gods, as the case may be, form separate divisions called *bhaibandi*, within which marriage is prohibited. Each division has a totem; that of the seven-god worshippers is a porcupine, while the other three have adopted respectively the tiger, the crane, and the tortoise. Each of these main divisions is again



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

GOND CRADLE.

subdivided into a number of totemistic septs, and marriage is prohibited, not only between members of the same sept, but also with members of a sept having the same totem, even in another main division.

72. The marriage ceremony has never crystallised and varies much from place to place. The Raj Gonds, as might be expected, have adopted Hindu ceremonials. Amongst Rawanbansis modified forms of the most primitive customs still exist. As compared with Hindu ceremonial, the most distinctive feature of a Gond marriage is that the procession usually, though not always, starts from the house of the bride, and the ceremony is in the main performed at the house of the bridegroom, a relic of marriage by capture. When a Gond wishes to marry his children, he looks first to his sisters' children, upon whom he considers himself to have a first claim; such a marriage is known as *dudh lautava, i.e.*, the return of the milk. But infant marriage is not practised, and the girl is as a matter of fact allowed a great deal more latitude in the choice of a husband than is the case with Hindus. Amongst the poorest classes marriage by service is still common; the bridegroom, known as *lamsina*, serves the bride's father as farm labourer for a term of years, usually three, at the end of which the marriage is celebrated at the expense of the bride's father. The bride must ride to the bridegroom's house, again a relic of capture; it is a common sight to see a bride, when the contracting parties are too poor to provide a horse or palanquin, being carried pickaback by a relative. The actual ceremony has been portrayed by Mr. Hislop in his translation of the Gondi epics. The song tells of how Lingo, the great prophet of the Gonds, instructed the Pardhans, who now hand on their knowledge to the Gonds:—"Assemble five daughters and grind turmeric. Make an offering to the domestic gods and the others in their degree. Drink, wash the feet,

Marriage among Gonds.

present salutation, join the hands. Spread a blanket and make all the Gonds to sit upon it. Keep a full pitcher of liquor on the left. Call for two more pitchers full of liquor, and drink according to custom. Keep in a brass plate a lamp, some rice, two pice, some betelnut, and a box of kuku (red powder) with gulal (red ochre). Apply a *tika* to the front of the pitcher . . . . Break the pitcher, and let the women on the bride's side sing: A pair of blankets having been spread, O father, you have lost your dearest daughter. O father, for the love of liquor you have lost your dearest daughter."

Gond Burial.

73. The dead are buried at the burial ground or *marghat*, usually on the bank of some dry stream near the village site, with the head facing North. A cot, a vessel of water, a small heap of gram and a pice are as a rule left at the head of the grave after the performance of the last rites. Formerly a cow used to be sacrificed at the village grove, but only a few of the more particular septs are able now to keep up this extravagance, and a goat, a pig or fowl is generally substituted. The once common practice of burying the dead in the house where they die has now ceased, and the Hindu practice of carrying out the moribund into the open air has to some extent taken its place. Some of the more substantial Gonds also occasionally burn their dead, and the Raj Gonds usually make a practice of this. To ascertain whether the soul of the departed has merged in the Great God, Bara Deo, two grains of rice are put into a pot full of water. If they meet, the soul has found its God, and all is well; if not, a month is spent in prayer to the God to receive the soul of the dead. The consent of the God being received through the *panda* (priest) or other medium in whom the God is supposed to reside, the relatives of the dead proceed to the boundary of the village, and on the main road leading to some neighbouring village they fix a pointed wooden stake, with an iron trident and a red flag

attached, and round the foot pile up a cairn of stones, known as *kor*.

74. The Gonds are short in stature, but wiry and muscular. In complexion they are very dark; the features are flat and coarse and the forehead low. The women are usually buxom and have a free carriage, but seldom (to European ideas) any pretension to good looks; they age rapidly, doubtless owing to exposure. The men have no very distinctive dress: a loincloth and a coarse brown cotton blanket for a coat is the usual dress of the poorer, with or without a more or less ragged and exiguous piece of dirty white cloth or a coloured cotton skull cap for headdress. The better off substitute for the blanket a buttoned-up *kurta* or short, padded coat. The women usually wear a red cotton *lugra* or *sari*, fastened tightly round the waist, passed between the legs, under the right arm and twice across the body, being finally fastened into the waist on the left. They also wear a quantity of white metal ornaments, including anklets filled with shot or stones, which rattle as they walk. Round the neck they wear strings of beads and cowries, or occasionally a necklet of rupees or a plain silver band; they go bare-headed, with the hair bunched into a lump on the left at the back. Practically the whole of the exposed portions of the body, the forehead, legs, arms, face and hands, are tattooed. The staple food of the caste is kodon grain, made into gruel (pej), of which the water is drunk in the morning and will support the men through a long and tiring day's work; the solid matter is eaten as an evening meal. They also eat rice and occasionally wheat, and eke out the grain ration with mahua, wild roots and vegetables. But the Gond craves for flesh, and is practically omnivorous in respect to it; monkey and wild dog is about the only flesh he will not touch, and deer, rats, snakes, muggers, birds, locusts, are all grist to his

Physical Condition.

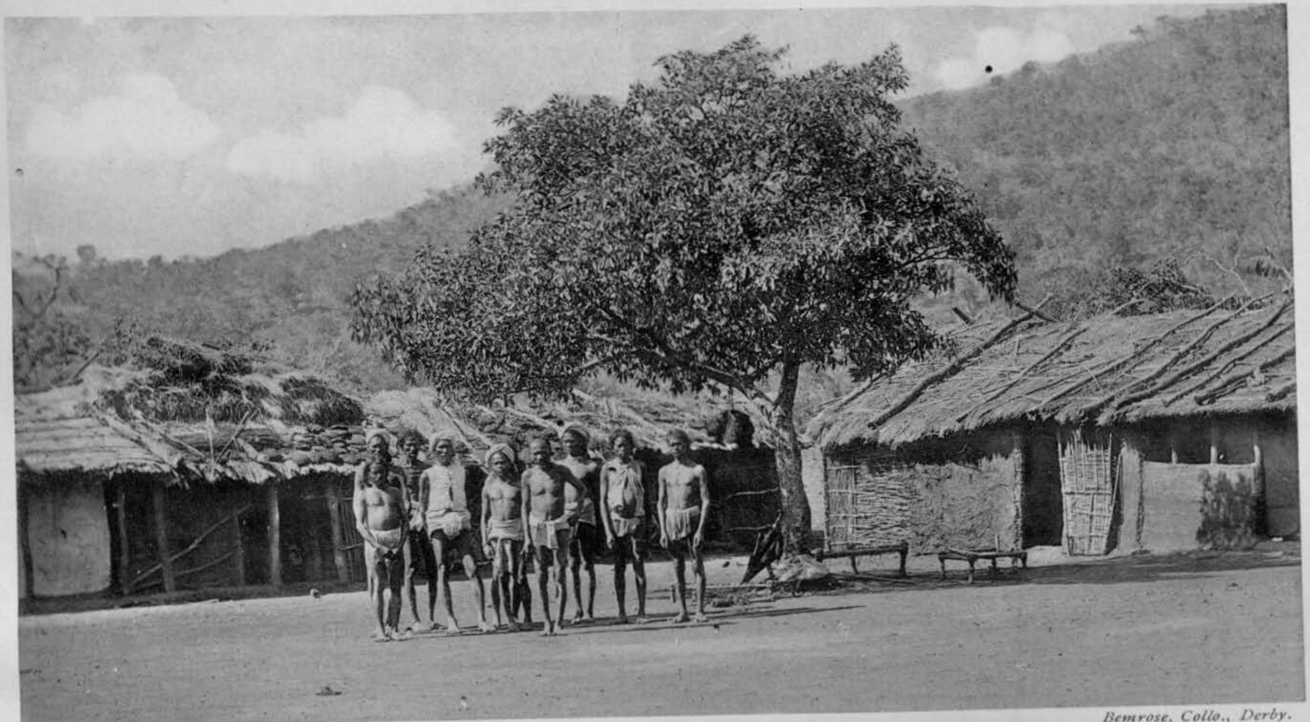
mill. They will even consume the flesh of a panther-kill ten or twelve days old of a fragrance too great for the ordinary man even to approach within fifty yards.

Character of Gonds.

75. The outstanding characteristics of the Gond temperament are truth, simplicity, cheerfulness and inconsequence. Until they commence rubbing shoulders with Hindu civilisation, they are truthful and honest. There is an authentic case of an old and infirm Gond in the hot weather trudging a distance of ninety miles to pay a debt to a caste fellow. In contact with Hindu civilisation, however, there is no more childlike and incorrigible liar and cheat than a Gond. They are superstitious to a degree : the hoot of an owl, the death of a relative, the failure of a crop, are often sufficient to persuade a Gond that his residence is unlucky for him and drive him out to pastures new, always, if he can, to return to die in the place of his birth. As farm labourers they are noted for their faithfulness and obedience. They have endurance, but little physique ; stolidity, but little real courage ; industry, but no application. They are happy and contented in good times, and never less than cheerful even in bad. Their faults are intemperance, improvidence, inconsequence and lack of intelligence ; they are dirty in their habits and untidy in their persons ; among themselves sexual morality is lax though there is no laxity between their women and men of other castes. Balancing good against bad, they are an amiable people, who it is to be hoped will retain a permanent hold upon this their last stronghold against Hindu aggression.

System of Agriculture.

76. The Gond system of agriculture is naturally poor. Their cattle are small and weak, and they yoke bullocks and cows indifferently ; and their favourite crop is kodon kutki and the oilseeds (til and jagni), which, given an average monsoon, grow best with a mere scratching of the poorest red murram soil. In the less advanced tracts, notably Raigarh-



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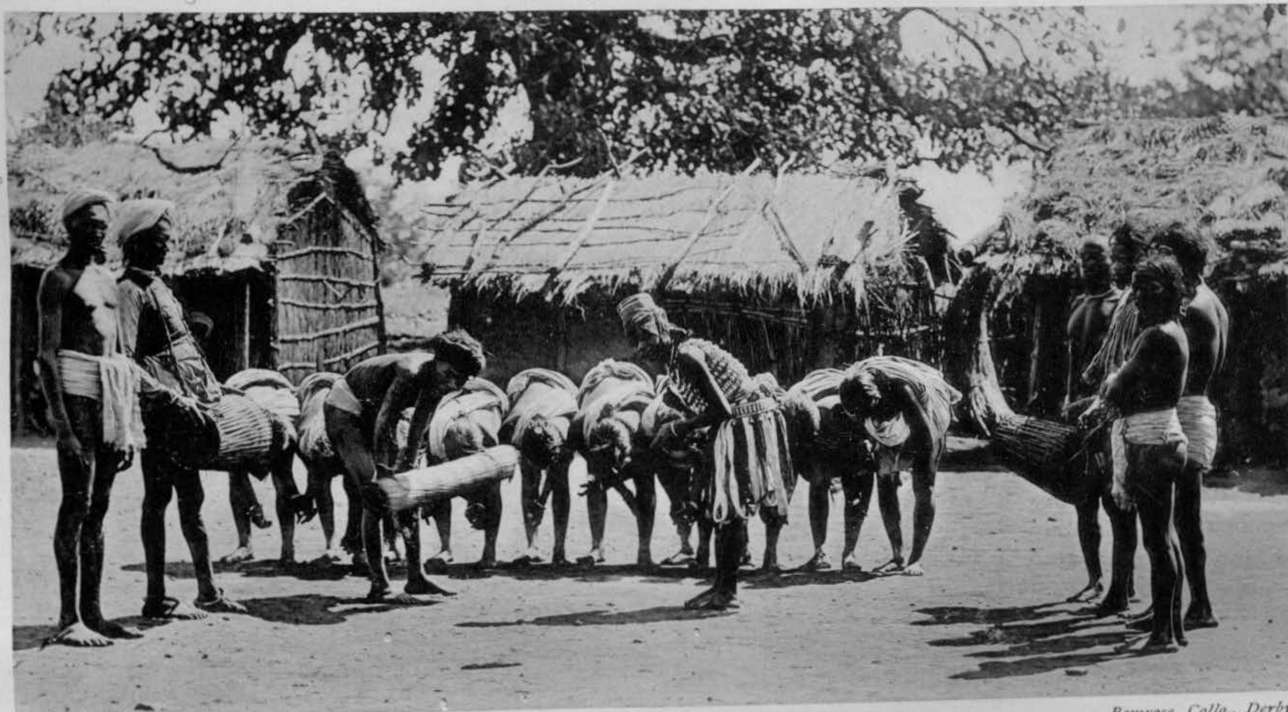
BAIGA VILLAGE AND GROUP OF BAIGAS.

Bichchea and the Ghugri estate, cultivation is shifting and unstable, though there are large areas of black soil of excellent quality; little wheat is grown, and cultivation is confined mainly to the lighter hill millets and oilseeds. No attempt is made to enrich the soil, which is continually put under crop in the assurance that there is equally good and almost virgin soil at hand to replace what must be fallowed. But in the more settled Gond tracts, especially the Partabgarh and Jholpur groups, the Gonds have settled down to regular and permanent cultivation of wheat and other cereals, and have shown themselves, though not so good cultivators as Hindus, at least able to improve. Here they have taken kindly to the cultivation of black soil, which in the more undeveloped tracts they either despise, or regard as useful only as enabling them to hedge against drought.

Baigas.

77. Baigas number 14,000, or somewhat over four per cent. of the total population. They are the most primitive and interesting of the forest tribes of the district; but they have completely lost their language, if they ever had one, speak Hindi, and profess to scorn a knowledge of Gondi. Their origin is obscure, but they are almost certainly older established than the Gonds, and while retaining their religious ascendancy over them, were gradually pressed by them into the fastnesses of Eastern Mandla, which are now their home. Their own idea of their origin closely resembles our history of the creation: Nanga and his wife Nangi, the ancestors of the whole human race, had two sons who married their sisters; from the elder of them is sprung the Baiga caste, while the younger is the progenitor of the rest of the human race. There are Baigas to be found here and there all over the district, but their principal habitat is in the recesses of the Maikal Range to the east of the District. They are the priests and wizards of the Gonds, and to some extent also of the Hindus.

Though the practice is now falling into disuse, practically every village or group of villages in the district, whether Hindu or aboriginal, at one time had, and most still have a Baiga priest, who receives from each tenant a regular annual remuneration at the usual rate of one kuro (four or five seers) of kharif seed per plough. His duties are somewhat indefinite; kharif sowings will not be undertaken until he has performed sacrifice, he is often the *garpagari* or exorciser of hail, he has to purify the village in case of an outbreak of disease, for which he is also handsomely paid by the job, and he protects it generally from evil spirits. Three or four years ago the educated Hindu inhabitants of Mandla town called in a Baiga priest to perform his wizardry in the case of a virulent outbreak of cholera which proved too much for the Brahmans. On that occasion, the usual ceremony of the scape-goat and the devil cart proved unsuccessful in allaying the disease; but so great was the faith of the inhabitants in the Baiga, that on his explaining that the amount first subscribed (some fifty rupees) was not sufficient, a second sum of double the amount was contributed and a second ceremony gone through. In character, like the Gonds, the Baigas are simple, honest and truthful, and when once their distrust of the stranger has been overcome, they are cheerful and companionable. But their shyness led them to such lengths in the first great famine of 1897, that many died of starvation with relief at their very doors, overlooked by their Gond and Hindu fellow villagers, and themselves afraid to apply; and even later when their first shyness had been overcome, it was no uncommon thing for the whole male population of a village to flee into the jungles on the approach of a relief officer, leaving their women and children to treat with the intruder as best they might. Settled amongst Hindus, they invariably sink to the lowest position possible, both socially and morally; for they are poor labourers and receive scant consideration. In their



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

A BAIGA WOMEN'S DANCE.

own communities in east Dindori, however, they hold their heads high, have a carefully arranged village community, and maintain some tradition of a quondam possession of power as a ruling race, for which however there seems little foundation in fact. Their villages are usually perched on some almost inaccessible crag, or down some difficult valley. The village is built in the form of a regular square, with a tree surrounded by an earthern platform or a pile of firewood in the centre, where the elders sit and discuss affairs of state. The houses, which are built of wattle and daub and thatched with grass, are small and low, but neat and often ornamented with primitive drawings of tigers, elephants and pigs in gaudy colours. Those on each side of the square are contiguous, and the entrance, which is only $3\frac{1}{2}$ or 4 feet high, is usually the only face fronting the square. The square is always kept clean and garnished by the women and, though pigs and fowls are allowed to run loose, generally speaking the conservancy arrangements are excellent. Separate from the village and at some little distance will be found the Agarias' forge, if any exists there, a shed or line of sheds open all round, where the village usually congregates to watch the smelting. In person the Baigas are slighter and lighter than the Gonds, the features are less flat, and the face generally finer drawn, though many of the Bharotia sub-caste are hardly distinguishable in feature from Gonds, and betray the fact that the lower sub-castes were undoubtedly at one time recruited from that race. The scantiness of their dress is extreme. It is said that God gave their ancestor, Nanga, a piece of cloth six cubits long, but Nanga tore off a piece of $1\frac{1}{4}$ cubits, and returned the balance as not being wanted. Now therefore a loincloth of $1\frac{1}{4}$ cubits, a few strings of cowries and beads, and possibly an armlet, is all the clothing a Baiga uses, even in the coldest weather; and the majority use no head covering xcept their own long hair. They are equal to even more

sustained exertion than the Gonds, and on the most slender sustenance. Their real courage, when they are not cold, is greater than that of the Gond. A Baiga has been known to walk up to a wounded pig armed with only a bow and arrow, and get severely wounded for his pains; and many instances are on record of a Baiga rescuing a companion from panthers and tigers, armed only with a club or axe. They are expert in the use of the bow and arrow and the axe. Mr. Bell has seen a small boy with a bag of six quail as the result of a morning's work with his diminutive bow, and he himself received a wound in the leg from the axe of a Baiga glancing off the back of a mouse-deer in full flight during a beat. But their reputation as expert trackers is ill deserved; they have neither the application nor the industry necessary for successful tracking, and they cannot compare in this respect with the aboriginals of the south of the Province.

Their wants from the outside world are few, consisting only of salt and the clothes they wear; their few implements of agriculture or the chase are supplied by the local smith, and their food, which is kodon kutki, *Baigani tur* (pulse) and *Shakarkand* (sweet potatoes), supplemented by countless roots and fruits, they obtain by their own slight exertions. They have little or no idea of economy. A Baiga shikari, who was given a present of twenty-five rupees, was asked how he intended to spend so large a sum. He replied quite seriously that thirteen rupees would be given to a money-lender in satisfaction of an ancient debt, two rupees would be spent on food and clothing, and the remaining ten he was going to keep for liquor at the approaching Holi festival. Falstaff could scarcely have improved on such a distribution.

Bewar Cultivation.

78. Strictly speaking, a Baiga cannot without offence lacerate the breast of Mother Earth with the plough; and hence it is said they took to *bewar*, their typical form of cultivation.

In his heart of hearts, the Baiga has still a contempt for regular cultivation, which is reflected in his story that God made him king of the forest, with all the wood-craft necessary to wring from the jungle the eatables wherewith for his benefit it has been stocked; whereas Hindus and other such inferior persons lack this wisdom, and are chained perforce to the drudgery of cultivation. A *bewar* consists of from two to three acres of thick forest, often on a steep and almost precipitous slope. About May the whole of the wood is cut down and burnt *in situ*, and the ashes spread over the surface; and on the break of the rains kodon, kutki, *Baigani tur* or sweet potatoes are sown in the ashes without further preparation. Provided the rains continue late enough, a plot of this kind will continue to give excellent crops until the fourth year, when a fresh scene of operations must be sought. There is much misconception as to the amount of permanent damage done to the forests by the axe cultivation of the Baigas, which has been blamed for the denudation of the sources of the Upper Nerbudda and her tributaries. Mr. Bell discussed this matter at length with many Baigas, and the allegation is not in accordance with either their assertions or his own observation. They claim that the jungle only grows the thicker and stronger after the abandonment of a *bewar*, and they have shown not one, but fifty abandoned *bewars* where the sal reproduction was strong and luxuriant enough even to impede progress. It is the *dahia* cultivation of the Gonds, they assert, which has denuded the forests. The reason for this is that Gonds cultivate only below the line of frost. The sal once cut in those regions can only reproduce small shoots, which are destroyed by the annually recurring frosts. As frost comes as early as the middle of November, the Baiga crops, which as a rule are late ripeners, must be sown where they will not suffer from it. The Baigas therefore choose a site well above the line of frost for their *bewar*,

and in such sites the sal can freely reproduce. The Gond inflicts a permanent, the Baiga only a temporary, injury to the forests.

The Baiga Chak or Reservation.

79. It is incorrect to say that the Baiga cannot be induced to take to cultivation. Doubtless their cultivation is of the poorest and most scratchy, and if they were given a free hand, many of them would possibly revert to axe cultivation. But the great majority of the Mandla Baigas have now taken to plough cultivation, as perforce they must, seeing that *bewar* cultivation has been put a stop to everywhere, both in malguzari and in Government forest, except the Baiga Chak or Reservation. This is a block of some 36 square miles of rugged and inaccessible jungle in the heart of the Maikal Range, containing six (at present only four) villages, which was set apart for the Baigas about 35 years ago. Here they were allowed to pursue unfettered their ancestral methods of hunting and agriculture, at the rate of one rupee per axe; but side by side with this concession attempts were made to wean them to plough cultivation. In 1893 they were provided with bullocks at Government expense; and though some of these did undoubtedly in the subsequent bad times die of neglect or find their way by less legitimate means into the Baiga cooking pots, the result has been very marked. In fact, only about one-fifth of the Baiga population of the district live in the Baiga Reserve; and of these only 74 families, in only three of the six villages, now practice *bewar* at all. They limit their operations to an area of 292 acres, which with the necessary rotations represents a reservation for axe cultivation of 2336 acres or one-tenth of the total area of the Reserve.

Sub-tribes of Baigas.

80. There are seven sub-tribes of Baigas, *viz.*, the Binjhwars, Bharotias, Narotias, Raibhainas, Kathbhainas, Kondwans, and Gondwainas. The Binjhwars are the highest



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

A BAIGA MEN'S DANCE.

and have adopted some Hindu observances, such as abstaining from the flesh of the cow and buffalo tribe, and of reptiles and rats; and the writer recently found a case amongst Bharotias in which, while all the junior members of the family joined in a feast off the carcase of a bison he had shot, the recognised head of the family was unable to do so. The Binjhwars can give food to, but will not take it from, the lower sub-tribes. In Mandla the Bharotias are the commonest; many of these shave the head except for a *choti* or central lock, and are known as *Mundia* or shaven Baigas. There is not as amongst Gonds any strict rule of exogamy in the main sub-tribes; but each sub-tribe is divided into a number of exogamous septs, often identical in name with the Gond septs, such as Markam, Marabi, Nelam, Tekam; and some of the sub-tribes have also partially assimilated the Gond subdivision according to the number of gods worshipped.

Marriage Rules.

81. A Baiga may not take a wife from his own sept or from one worshipping the same number of gods; but he may marry within his mother's sept. Infant marriage is not practised, though arrangements are sometimes made for a betrothal soon after birth, which however requires ratification by a subsequent ceremony. The girl frequently selects her own husband. The first proposal comes from the house of the bride, and unlike the Gond custom the bridegroom must go to the house of the bride for the marriage ceremony. The cost of a bride is from five to twenty rupees, and the total expense of the marriage ceremony is from ten to fifty rupees of which the greater part falls upon the bridegroom's family. It is essential that the bridegroom should meet the bride's party riding on an elephant; and this animal being now in the Baiga country somewhat less common than marriages, his part is enacted by two wooden cots lashed together and covered with a blanket;

a cloth trunk is affixed in front and the whole is borne by carriers. The elephant must charge and trample down the bride's procession (probably a relic of capture) until bought off with a rupee, when the parties embrace and proceed to the marriage-shed. Here the couple, after throwing fried rice at one another until they are tired, seal the marriage bond by walking three or seven times round the marriage post with their clothes tied together. Husband and wife may not have intercourse on a cot, because, though men may sleep on a cot, women are supposed to be compelled by the gods to lie on Mother earth. Polygamy is permitted, but is not common; widows may remarry, but unless they marry their husband's younger brother, the latter must be paid five rupees by way of consolation.

Baiga Burial.

82. The dead are usually buried naked, with the head pointing south; but men of mark and old persons are burnt as a special honour to save them from being devoured by beasts. In the grave are placed a rupee or two and some tobacco; if the corpse is burnt, a rupee, placed in the mouth immediately before death, is recovered by a daughter from the pyre and used as an amulet. A black and a white fowl are sacrificed and eaten near some nallah, a portion being set aside for the dead. A platform of earth is erected over the grave of a man of mark with a stone at the head; and here the family practise ancestor worship in time of trouble, or consign the spirit of a member who has for any reason to be buried elsewhere. During mourning which lasts nine days, all ordinary duties are in abeyance in the household, even cooked food being supplied by neighbours.

The Dhobas.

83. A small caste, apparently aboriginal and peculiar to Mandla, are the Dhobas. In the census of 1901 they were erroneously classified as Dhobis, and it is difficult to know whether they are on the increase or decrease. In the



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A TYPICAL BAIGA FAMILY.

census of 1911 they were again amalgamated with Dhobis, but their numbers cannot be more than two or three thousand. They are extremely ignorant and parochial, and either cannot or will not give any account of their origin and relationship with other castes. They are confined to a few villages in the upper valley of the Burhner, of which the principal are Singori, Bano, and Tikaria. Probably they are in their origin a Hinduised sub-caste or sept of Gonds, or at least a tribe of closely allied aboriginal cultivators. They are dark in complexion and have, though in a less degree, the flat features, coarse nose and receding forehead of the Gond; but they are taller in stature and not so strongly built and are much less capable of exertion. This is no doubt due to the constant interbreeding necessitated by the smallness of their numbers. They are much better cultivators and are materially more substantial, as evidenced by the greater elaboration and cost of their marriage ceremonies. Their dress is neater and differs little from that of the less substantial cultivating Hindu castes. The males wear an ordinary country-made *dhoti* four yards long, and a *bandi* or short buttoned coat; they never go bareheaded like the Gonds and Baigas, but wear a four and a half yard *swafa* (turban) and for ornamentation silver bracelets, a string of glass beads round the neck, with possibly a gold mohur or two, a finger ring of brass, iron, or copper, and brass earrings. Females wear the *lugra*, or white country-made sari eight yards long. The ornaments of a fairly well-to-do man's wife consist of a *sutia* or neckband of silver, a pair of silver earrings, a pair of silver or brass anklets, and a pair of brass armlets; unlike the men they seldom or never go shod. Tobacco smoking and wine drinking are freely permitted, but they are an abstemious caste. Their food is usually dal and rice, or chapattis (unleavened bread) and dal; but they also, like the Gonds, eat kodon and kutki gruel. They drink milk, and have no prejudice against milking a cow, when she has been purified by the Ahirs, though

they do not, like the Gonds, yoke cows to the plough. Twelve exogamous gotras have been listed upon enquiry; but the Dhobas are a peculiarly unintelligent caste, and it is improbable that the list is either exhaustive or correct. They are Bagmār, Bagchariā, Gādāmudiā, Tumrāchi, Sunwāni, Sonsunwāni, Barangā, Chhātā, Danda-karain, Katnāgar, Marehtā, Marāluhati. Some of these names appear to have a local signification, and are probably derived from villages, in which the caste settled after breaking off from the main family, as in the case of the Rathor Telis. The Sunwāni and Sonsunwāni gotras are held to be the highest.

Marriage and other customs of Dhobas.

84. Marriage is forbidden between the Bagmar and Bagcharia, the Marehta and Katnagar or Maraluhati, and the Sunwani and Sonsunwani gotras, because these are supposed by the caste to have been originally sub-divisions of the same gotra. Maternal cousins may marry, as may maternal half-brother and sister; and widow remarriage, with a very simple ceremonial, is permitted. Proposals for marriage come from the family of the boy; and the greater part of the expense, which consists mainly in feasting, falls on his relatives, as in the case of other aboriginals though not in so marked a degree; and occasionally a small dowry of a cow and cooking vessels is given with the bride. The ceremony is in three stages, the espousal, which takes place usually in infancy, the *barokhi*, or ratification of the espousal, and the *biyahwa*, or marriage ceremony proper; there is no fixed period or time for either of the latter. The feasting all takes place at the house of the bridegroom's father, who pays the cost. After two days' feasting is completed, the guests accompany the groom to the bride's village, where they are met on the boundary by the bride's family. Here interchange of liquid refreshment takes place between the two processions, lasting until evening, when the bridegroom and his party are formally sum-

moned to the bride's house. On their arrival, the bride is bathed and arrayed by her relatives and brought out to the *mandap* or marriage booth, where the two contracting parties stand opposite the marriage post and throw rice at each other. They are then seated, and the assembled company wash the feet of bride and bridegroom, and make them small presents of money known as *paonpakharai*. They are then carried inside the bride's house, the bridegroom sprinkles rice over the bride and takes hold of her hand, while their clothes are tied together in a knot; the knot is reopened and the bride's father gives a feast to the caste. The bridegroom and his party remain one night at the bride's house, after which the couple go to their new home. The total cost of the marriage in a fairly well-to-do family, from the espousal to the wedding, may be as much as Rs. 140, of which about a quarter falls upon the bride's family.'

When a man wishes to marry a widow, he first assembles a few of his friends and asks the woman in their presence if she will marry him. If she agrees, he sends her a glass-bangle, fixes a day, and brings her to his house. He then feasts his caste-fellows, and the ceremony is finished. If a Dhoba cannot afford the expenses of an ordinary marriage, he can win a bride by service (*Lamjhana*). In these circumstances the betrothal and ratification ceremony are not performed, but as soon as the term of service has expired, the man marries the girl, all expenses (amounting to Rs. 20) falling on the bride's father. Unlike the Gonds and Baigas a pregnant woman stops working after six months, and soon goes into retirement. After birth the woman is impure for five or six days. She does not appear in public for a month, and takes no part in outdoor occupations or field-work, until the child is weaned, that is, six months after its birth. Medicinal spices are given to the mother, but no special ceremonial is observed, nor are Brahmans called in at this or any other of the ceremonies.

When a death has occurred in a household, the family are impure for seven or eight days, after which they perform the funeral rites and feast the members of their caste. If a person is too poor to pay for the rites, he is excommunicated until he can find the necessary money. If it is only an unweaned baby that has died, a caste-dinner is not essential. The special deities of the Dhobas are Dulha Deo and Narayan Deo, whom they worship in the month Chait (April) with offerings of cocoanut, nuts, treacle and burnt ghi; they do not sacrifice goats and hens, and unlike the Gonds, worship privately in their houses as well as in congregations.

The head of the caste is always a member of the Sunwani *got*, and is known as "Raja." He has no deputy and officiates in all ceremonies of the caste; he receives no contribution from the caste, but a double share of food and sweetmeats, when they are distributed. The other members of the Panch he is at liberty to choose from any *got* he likes. The caste rules show a curious medley of laxness and strictness. For instance, a man who is sent to gaol is not put out of caste, as this is a Government order; but a man, who keeps a woman of another caste, is out-casted until he puts her away, and even then is not re-admitted unless his general character is a fair one. If he passes this ordeal safely, the Raja is the first to sit and eat with him, both drinking water in which gold has been dipped by way of ceremony. A man who gets maggots into a wound is only re-admitted to caste in the months Chait and Pus; other people are admitted at any time.

The ears of boys are pierced at 12 years of age, of girls at 8 or 9. Children of both sexes have to observe caste rules from their birth, but until the ears are pierced, they can take *kachcha* food from a Brahman. The Dhobas can eat any kind of flesh except cow and field-mice.

Rathor Telis.

85. Though the Teli caste form an insignificant portion of the population of Mandla, they, or rather the Rathor sub-division of

them, are of considerable interest to a student of human nature. The Rathor Telis immigrated from Maihar about the year 1770 A.D., and settled for the most part in the Rampur Taluka. At some point in their history they discarded the much despised oil-seller's trade and took to cultivation; and now they claim to be descended from a line of Rajput kings, to whose caste they say they really belong. The original Rathor Kshatryas however wear the sacred thread, and do not recognise widow-marriage; and the names of their septs are eponymous; the Rathor Telis on the other hand disagree with the Kshatryas in each of these particulars, but observe the customs of other Telis. In order to reconcile these discrepancies with genuine Rajput customs, they have lately "discovered" an ancient manuscript, which purports to give the true history of their departure from the royal court which was once their home. A translation of it is here appended :—

"In the days of the Surajbansis the king of Ajodya was Sri Ramchandra, the great warrior, to whom were born two sons Lav and Kush; and the sons of Lav were Rastra and Sisodiya. The guardian goddess of the Rastras was Nagnechia, who upon a time likened herself to a *sain-bird* (saras) and in this guise kept watch and ward over the fortunes of their race; wherefore the Rastras took to themselves the name of Rastrasaini, which is to say, those who worship the sain-bird goddess. These Rastrasaini, rising to great eminence as men of war, changed their name to that of Rastrawar, that is, lords among Rastras, from which name the word Rathor is derived.

Of this same Kshatrya line was prince Jaychand, Maharaja of Kanauj, and it chanced that in Sambat 1251 Shah-ud-din Muhammad Gori came up against the kingdom of Kanauj to do battle with Jaychand. The head of the Raja was smitten from his shoulders, but the headless trunk fought on, and his followers did great deeds of valour. At last to the south of the Raja's line a body of Rathors broke and fled; hotly pursued by the enemy, they

plunged into an impenetrable wood, and concealed themselves in the thickets. From this shelter they saw a man of their pursuers draw his sword and ride upon a solitary traveller, and make to kill him. Whereupon the poor fellow cried aloud, "Slay me not; I am no Kshatrya, wearing the sacred thread of the twice-born, but only an honest husbandman at my daily toil;" and the horseman believed his word and bade him go in peace. The Rathors saw the man's escape, and being in sore plight thought to profit by his lesson. Each man doffed his sacred thread and threw aside his weapons; and came from out the shelter of the wood with the goad of a bullock driver in his hand. The enemy asked of them their business and they replied, saying: "The fighting men that came anon have got them away to the South, but we be simple labouring folk who live by the plough; no warrior caste are we." And baring their breasts they disclosed their necks, from which they had erstwhile slipped the sacred thread. The enemy were deceived by the tale and let them go. Thus the Rathors, 750 men in all, saved their lives and made their way back to their homes. Now at that time there happened to be two serving men with the Rathors, one of whom had thrown away his thread, while the other had kept his thread, and only changed his garments. This man came and disclosed to the Raja's son how that the Rathors had saved their lives at the cost of their sacred threads. The prince inquired of the Ráthors if this was so; to which they made reply that the servant's tale was false; and the other servant also took oath, swearing that there was no truth in his comrade. But he, much enraged at being thus outwitted, cried out "Look, O sire, look with thine own eyes, and the truth shall be revealed." Thereupon the prince bade them bare their breasts and saw that none carried his sacred thread; and he gave orders to the captain of his guard to blow them away from the guns;* for, he said, it had been more seemly for them to die in the

*This event is supposed to have happened in the year Samvat 1251, *i.e.*, 1200 A. D.

Kshatrya faith than save their lives by its shameful renunciation. Thus speaking the prince stalked angrily away, leaving his captain deep in thought. "These men and I," quoth he, "are brother Rajputs and of one kin together. If I put them not to death, I must needs make light of the king's commandment and incur his just displeasure; but if I slay them, the crime of killing my caste-fellows will be mine; therefore in either case I must needs become a sinner." So the captain pondered much in his heart and reasoned again: "In the holy Shastras it is written that to slay and to put asunder are close akin. I will therefore send the Rathors into perpetual exile, and thereby save my soul from fratricide and fear of the king's displeasure: for, when two courses lie open to a man, if both be bad, it behoves him ever to chose the less evil of the two". Thus thinking he explained the matter to the chief of the 750 threadless Rathors, saying: "This is indeed a hard matter, O brother. For if I give heed to the voice of the king, when he said unto me 'Blow them from the guns,' then shall I slay mine own brothers, the sons of my kinsmen; aye, and the weeping of your wives will be a bitter grief unto me. But if I blow you not from the guns, then shall I be disloyal to my king and shall incur his great displeasure; and he is yet a young man, wherefore I have great fear of him. Notwithstanding, I have devised a plan: let you and your fellows make a solemn covenant before me to observe it, then will I show you the way to safety and save my own house from destruction; though, inasmuch as ye are men of the Rastras and, because of the valour of your fathers, are called lords among the Rastras, far better had it been that ye had perished than should live dishonoured among men. Howbeit, there is one way whereby I can save myself from fratricide and the sin of disobedience, and ye can save yourselves from death. I will let you go, but take heed that ye leave no trace of your departure. Forget this place and say not 'We are Kshatrya born,' nor tell this tale to any man, lest

haply the king shall hear that I have let you go and destroy me, aye, and my whole house, in place of you. Get ye to a certain forest and there will I send your wives and children in some disguise; and when they shall come up to you, then shall ye forthwith hie you to a foreign land." Hearing this the Rathors made request of the king's captain saying: "If so be it that our wives and children will not come, send word of it by some trusty hand, that we may give up hope of them and depart." And the captain said: "I will send you word thereof; but get ye gone at once that the king may find no trace of you. For even as I am saving the lives of you, so must ye save the lives of me and mine. Betray not my confidence, reveal it not to any man." Thereupon the Rathors gave him thanks for his mercy and swore upon oath they would never return nor reveal their story to any man. Hearing this and seeing their miserable plight, the captain said: "Take heed that when ye are in a strange land, ye take not water nor food from any man without a perfect test of his purity, and it shall come to pass that when the king shall cease from his wrath, I will ask permission of him and search you out." He then sent the Rathors into the forest and set linstock to the guns, that the king hearing the noise of them might believe the sentence had been carried out. The captain then went to the wives of the Rathors and disclosed the whole matter to them, saying: "Change ye your garments and hie ye to such and such a jungle, where your men-folk await you." But the women scoffed at him, saying: "We have no concern with such traitors to their faith. We are the daughters of Kshatryas, and by Kshatryas were we wed. It is not meet that we should go to join men, who have given up their faith. Had they died, we should have become Sati, but now how can we show our faces among honourable women?" But the captain entreated them, and his words prevailed: the women discarding their *Angias*, *Nath* and *Beej*, sallied out in the guise of people of low-caste to join

their husbands. Thus some ten or twelve years passed away and when their children were ripe for marriage, they all gathered and took counsel together as to how the question of marriage should be settled. "We have sworn an oath to the captain," they said, "that we will not disclose our Rajput blood to any man, nor can we prove it, unless we refer to the land of our fathers; if we do this, we shall thereby break our solemn oath to the captain and bring misfortune upon him. But now no Rajput will take our daughters in marriage, nor give his daughters to our sons, and we Rathors will have no dealings with folk of low degree. Furthermore we may not marry our children to each other; for they are all scions of one Gotra and the law of the Shastra forbids their marriage one to another." Deliberating together they decided that to marry within the Gotra was more honourable than to mix their strain with lower castes, and framed a code of rules whereby this intermarriage should be regulated for all time. Dividing themselves up according to the villages in which they had settled, each division of them they called a Gotra, giving it the name of the village where it dwelt. Marriage was permitted between the Gotras; though in fact, they were no true Gotras at all, but merely names of villages, as, for instance, Pahunchamor, Panagar, Raypanagar, and Kankarkheri Panagar."

The manuscript which is rather long and tedious then goes on to describe how the Rathors "by their exceeding bravery" made themselves unpopular in their adopted home, and later on, finding it difficult to maintain themselves therein, migrated *en masse* to Rewah, occupying Chandia, Singhwara and Sohagpur; some also entered Mandla and settled at Ramgarh, others wandered as far as Bilaspur. They have given up the profession of arms in favour of that of husbandry, because it was owing to their disguise as ploughmen that they were able to elude the Moslem army at the beginning of their history. They have never recovered the sacred threads,

which they lost on that fatal day, and their women-folk never again took to the *Angias*, *Beej* and *Nath*, the insignia of the twice-born, which they discarded when they accompanied their husbands into exile. They have still further fallen from true Rajput principles by approving of widow-marriage, by ploughing with cattle and by making their women-folk bring out their midday meal to them in the fields. The ancient manuscript, which purports to be their history, tries to ex plain away all these discrepancies, but the world in general, and particularly the Rajput caste, has adopted a very sceptical view as regards its genuineness : and the unpleasant fact remains that no one, unless he be a member of the lowest castes, will take water from the hand of a Rathor Teli.

Marriage and other customs of the Rathors.

85A. On the question of marriage the Rathors adhere scrupulously to the rules laid down for them by their ancestors. The main principle observed in choosing a bride for a boy is that which is common to all Hindus :—the girl must be outside the *Gotra*, inside the caste. The choice of the bride lies entirely in the hands of the boy's father, nor is the girl consulted at all in the matter. In accordance with local customs the espousal is made when the boy and girl are about 10 or 11 years old, and as among the Rajputs the marriage proper takes place between the ages of 16 and 20. Some seven or eight days before the ceremony is to be performed, the bride's father requests the village priest (a Brahman) to draw up the *lagan*, a kind of bond specifying the dates for various functions connected with the marriage. Equipped with this document he repairs to the house of the bridegroom's father, accepts a little *gur* (treacle) by way of refreshment, and discusses the *lagan* with his son-in-law's father. If everything is arranged to the mutual satisfaction of all concerned, two days are allowed to pass, after which the *Madhwa* ceremony with its copious anointings of oil and turmeric is performed. The marriage proper takes place four

or five days after the *Madhwa*. The groom's father gives a dinner to his relatives and caste-fellows; in the course of the merry-making an iron *kankan* (the marriage emblem) is attached to the groom's right wrist and a gaudy head-dress known as the *maur* is placed on his head. He is then clothed in a *jāma* or long-coat, seated in a palki or on a pony, and taken off to meet his bride. His father's guests accompany him, forming the *barāt* or procession, finally taking up their position outside the bride's village, where they make merry with instruments of music, fireworks, and, if funds permit, a nautch. This spot is known as the *Janswara*. Before the couple are made man and wife, the bride goes to a temple and worships the pantheon, particularly Gaur Ganesh; when she has finished, the bridegroom follows her example, after which both place themselves in front of the bride's father. In order to tie the nuptial knot, the latter takes the bridegroom's hand and places it palm upward beneath his own. The girl then lays her hand on her father's and all three are tied together with a silken thread. The bride's brother pours a little water from a jar on to the hands, while a Brahman priest declaims a few appropriate extracts from some religious work. At the conclusion of the "service" the bride's father slips his hand from between the other two, leaving his daughter's lying in the palm of her husband. Caste-fellows and friends then present their gifts to the happy pair, after which they retire to privacy, accompanied only by the priest and barber, and perform the *pheri* ceremony of walking round and round the sacred fire. The marriage is now complete; bride and bridegroom mount into the palki, in which the groom had come, and proceed to the *Janswara*, where the baratees had made their first halt, returning later to the bride's house, to be the guests of her father at a banquet. As soon as the feast is over the party breaks up, the bride and bridegroom going to their new home, where they will live together for a few days, before the bride returns to the house of her parents.

A widow can re-marry provided she has first asked for and obtained the consent of her brothers. In point of social position a mistress is on the same level as a lawful wife; *parda* rules are not observed by any of the women folk. It is only after the second marriage ceremony that women cover their heads at all. They tattoo only their hands and feet, not their chin and cheeks as other castes do. They wear the ordinary red and black dhoti, bracelets of silver or bell-metal, and ear-rings of silver and lac. The Rathor law of partition is similar to that of the Marwari Rajputs, with whom they claim kinship, in that property is divided *per stirpem*, not *per capita*; and the Rathor Telis advance this as one of the more important proofs of their Rajput origin. This argument, however, is somewhat weakened by the fact that division of property *per stirpem* is the ordinary Hindu law of Central India; the observance of this law merely proves that they are Hindus by birth and not aboriginals. A man with no issue cannot adopt a son, but, if a woman has been left a widow and has no children, the *panches* appoint her nephew as manager of her property on her behalf. The guardian deity of the caste is the goddess Nagnechia, who is worshipped in the *Nim* tree.

The number of Rathor Telis is roughly about 7,000; many of these, however, live in other districts or Rewah State, particularly in Sohagpur and Chandia. In Mandla Rathors own thirty-three villages and shares in seven others. The malguzars are industrious and enterprising, the cultivators the best in the district.

Criminal Tribes.

86. *The district is notoriously free from heinous crime, and there are no real criminal tribes resident in Mandla. The Pankas, Katias and Maharas have a somewhat dubious reputation for honesty as castes; and the Banjaras are reputed to be

* The following note on the Criminal Tribes has been contributed by Mr. Bell.

rather uncertain in their ideas of property, if a strong bullock happens to come anywhere near their *tandas*, though they have now settled down, in a few villages in East Dindori, into a somewhat truculent, but otherwise fairly respectable and certainly extremely useful, body of semi-agricultural traders and carriers. A small gang of Bahellias, whose primary occupation is the snaring of animals, but who are not above lifting an occasional chicken or goat, from time to time comes into the district from Narsinghpur, and now and again a party of Baluchis or other criminal wanderers under close surveillance passes through the district, laying hands on unconsidered trifles in the shape of chickens, dogs, goats and even occasionally ponies and cattle. Cattle-lifting is in fact the principal form of heinous crime; and from time to time a village in the North wakes up to find its whole herd of several hundred head has disappeared without trace or hope of recovery across the Rewah border. But the only so-called criminal tribe of the district, whose criminality is in fact mainly a thing of the past, are the Patharis or Pardhans, the minstrels of the Gonds. These are found in small numbers throughout the district, but their principal habitat is in the North, where a line of police-posts stretching from Jamgaon on the Rewah border to Maneri on the Jubbulpore border was established in times past to hold them in check. The great majority of them, except perhaps a few in the neighbourhood of Anjania, have now settled down to agriculture and other honest employments and many of the village watchmen are recruited from their ranks. Their operations, where they have any criminal tendencies left, are confined mainly to petty thefts, small housebreakings, and occasional excursions into cattle-lifting; but they have forgotten their distinctive methods in crime, and no case worthy of special mention has of late years occurred in Mandla. They are probably in their origin a menial sub-caste of Gonds, and all the numerous stories of their origin point in

this direction. According to one of these, the soil was once held unchallenged by three grades of Gond, the Raj Gond, the Khatolha, and the Rawanbansi. By an authoritative decision of the Gond Rajas, the derogatory duty of receiving the cast off clothing of the dead and performing other rites in connection with funerals was assigned to the Rawanbansis, who thereby became, as they are now, the inferior grade of Gonds. But these were too numerous for the purpose, and resented the work put upon them. They therefore selected by lot from amongst their number certain persons to perform these duties ; these thereby became the bards and to some extent servants of the rest of the Gonds, and were called Pardhans or Patharis. The origin of both names is wrapped in obscurity. Pathari is, perhaps, connected with Pathar, the name now given to the stony wheat country west of Mandla, but which may at one time have been applied to all the mountainous and rocky country of Central India where Patharis are found. Another picturesque account of the origin of the caste tells of how Parwati in Northern India was the mother of innumerable children, of whom the fair ones were called Hindus and the dark ones Gonds. The Gond babies fought and struggled so strenuously for their mother's milk, that they injured her breast and evoked the anger of Mahadeo. To relieve her of her troubles the god threw them all into a river, but the hardy youngsters swam out and began once more the assault upon their mother. Determined to be rid of them, Mahadeo then entombed them all, as he imagined, in one large sepulchre, over which he rolled a huge stone. One little girl, however, was overlooked, and she went crying to Parwati for her playmates. She was placed with the Hindu babies, but they beat her and turned her out ; whereupon her mother took pity on her sufficiently to show her where her real companions were buried. The child went to the stone-blocked sepulchre and called out to her

brothers, who assured her they were alive and anxious to escape, but could not come forth for lack of clothes. These were procured, and the whole party then set out for Central India. Here in the wilds they chanced to meet the Great God Baradeo, playing on a *kingri* or banjo : and he asked them for a servant to whom he would teach the art of music. They selected their youngest brother for this post, and he, profiting by the divine instruction, became so expert that he was appointed hereditary minstrel to the Gond race. Naturally enough, his instrument became, and still is, the *kingri;* and the Patharis are sometimes known as "kenkris."

Yet another story is that in former times some of the Rawanbansis refused or neglected to worship their deities, for which they were out-casted and relegated to the semi-menial position, which they now occupy.

Their criminal organisation was very complete, though nowadays it is probably broken up. In Hindu villages they are not numerous and live mingled with the general community : in the wilder parts of the district they live in separate villages, or separate hamlets of Gond villages, each hamlet being a self-contained and self-supporting unit. The sexes have their appointed sphere ; the men take the more active duty of thieving while the women act as spies, receivers, and guards. Their three implements of house-breaking are the *kanta*, or wooden handled crow-bar, about eighteen inches long, the *sarota*, a pair of handled blades similar to betelnut cutters, and the *hassia* or ordinary sickle. Armed with these weapons three or four men, who have been chosen from the general community, are sent out to "crack" the selected "crib." The proceeds are all brought back to the village and distributed by a *panchayat* presided over by a *mukhya* or *mukasi*. This officer is the *sir-panch* or arbiter in all the social affairs of the community, and also represents it in its dealings with neighbouring kotwars and malguzars. The

post requires some tact, as bribery is a delicate matter; he is therefore elected by the community for life, but is liable to removal, if his work is unsatisfactory. He is usually the oldest and most influential member of the community, with some material wealth and knowledge of the outer world, none the worse for having had some experience of the inner workings of a gaol. Nowadays, however, the old Pathari organisation is dissolved, or if it exists at all, is but a shadow of its former self; and the caste is burdened with an unsavoury reputation, which it little deserves.

SOCIAL LIFE AND CUSTOMS.

The Village.

87. A Hindu village * in Mandla is similar to those of other districts and has no need of special mention. The Gonds live in villages built on a different principle; instead of one homogeneous collection of buildings, the village consists of from two to twelve scattered hamlets, *tolas* or *kheras*, according to the extent of the cultivated area. If both Gonds and Hindus are living in the same village, the Gonds almost invariably settle in a separate hamlet from the rest of the community, and keep very much to themselves.

The Hamlet.

88. Each hamlet consists of a varying number, generally between ten and twenty wattle huts thatched with grass; it is roughly bisected by a single main street, which is the only means of ingress and egress. Occasionally in a specially large "*tola*" there may be one or two cross-streets, but this is unusual and not typical of Gond villages. The site chosen for the hamlet is the top of a hill or a piece of rising ground covered with light murram soil; the slope is most essential for carrying off the surface drainage from the hamlet into the small back gardens or *bari*, without which no Gond house is

* The descriptions of village life are derived largely from notes lent by Mr. Bell and other gentlemen.

complete ; for on it the Gond raises a "rains" crop of maize, a cold-weather crop of mustard, and the inevitable patch of tobacco.

Surroundings of the village.

89. Somewhere to the east of the village will be the burial ground covered with an untidy litter of broken cots and *gharras*, which have been carried out together with the corpses ; burial is the usual means of disposing of the dead bodies, though aged persons, especially if they belong to well-to-do families, may be cremated. On the extreme eastern boundary will be found a number of long stone cairns surmounted by a pole and flag. These are the shrines or cenotaphs of Gonds, who have died violent deaths, generally at the hands of tigers ; and so long as any relatives of the dead man remain in the village, the shrine will be visited and worshipped annually. Just outside the village in the shade of some tree, preferably of the fig kind, will be a small shed some three feet high, surrounded by broken cocoanut shells and small sticks decked out with flags ; this is the village shrine sacred to Khair Mata, and inside will be found a smooth stone lavishly coated with red and smelling strongly of country-liquor, of which a libation is daily poured over it. In most cases there is no well or tank, as the Gond prefers to drink the water of a nallah to anything else, in spite of the fact that he uses the same stream on the rare occasions when he bathes, and occasionally for steeping his evil-smelling hemp.

Grain and liquor.

90. The village rarely boasts of the luxury of a shop ; grain is either sold for cash to outside merchants from Jubbulpore or Bareilla, or to Banjaras, who make an annual tour along recognised beats of villages unvisited by less enterprising merchants ; or else the grain is bartered for household requirements at some of the numerous small bazaars, where there is a weekly traffic in petty quantities of

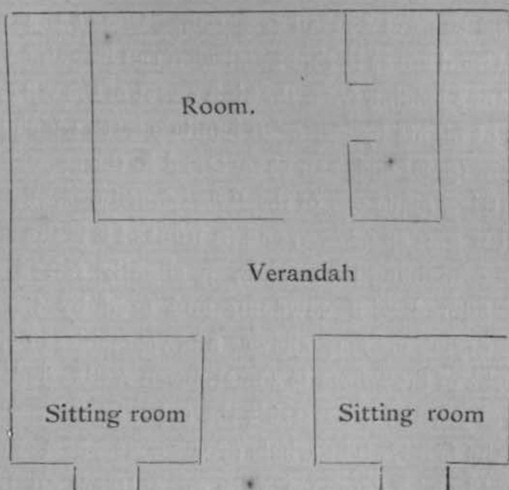
kodon, salt, ghi and oil, and much interchange of gossip and liquor. Every Gond village however will have its distillery, recognised or unrecognised, generally the latter, since the new system of contractor's spirit has been introduced. The apparatus, consisting of a couple of *gharras* and a pipe, is kept in the jungle near a nallah and, as soon as an Excise Officer begins to look about, is broken up and rendered quite unrecognisable. The whole village, from the mukaddam and kotwar downwards, is privy to the secret, and, should a hapless man be caught by the authorities in the act of illicit distillation, they all subscribe to pay his fine, or support his family while he is in gaol.

Society.

91. In the majority of Gond villages there is no resident malguzar. The real headman, who may, or may not, be titular mukaddam, is known as the Mandal, or Bhoi, if he has once been a malguzar or lessee. He is a man of substance, and cultivates several ploughs of land, using the services of several ploughmen. He lives on a slightly more luxurious scale than other tenants, and makes small advances of grain or money to people from his own or neighbouring villages on a low rate of interest. The remainder of the population consists of Gonds, with possibly a few Baigas in a separate tola, and the village Panda or priest, who serves a circle of villages, and lives in solitary state within a gaudily beflagged enclosure. To complete the tale, there is the village Ahir, with possibly two or three of his caste-fellows who have brought their herds to share the splendid pasture lands with him, a Barai, and a few Pankas, who have almost become naturalised Gonds. Besides the tenants there will be a few labourers, either living independently or doing service for a wife (Lamsini) in the house of their masters. The village servants are the mukaddam, kotwar, Lohar or blacksmith, possibly a Baiga priest, and the Ahir, who pastures the village cattle.

92. The house of a Hindu malguzar is of a pattern that may be seen in the villages of any district. A typical ground plan is shown below :—

Houses.



The whole area including all the rooms and the verandah amounts to about 25 or 30 by 16 feet. The householder's family live privately in the large central room, which may be sub-divided still further into smaller rooms. The sitting rooms are used by the male members of the family for receiving visitors, and the verandah provides a nursery for the children and a spare bedroom for travellers, who may be stopping the night in the village. Two separate buildings (with bamboo walls) are constructed for the accommodation of the cattle and the storing of grain. The ordinary Hindu cultivator builds on a smaller scale and stores his grain in the main building ; he generally has no sitting room, but entertains his friends in the verandah.

The homes of the Gonds are built on a less elaborate plan than those of the Hindus. The roof is supported by a "*baderi*" (roof tree) which rests on a pair of upright beams; it is built of tattis with a thatching of grass carelessly thrown on to it ; at the *oria* or front eaves it is about three or four

feet high, so that a full grown person has to stoop in entering. The walls, which are fixed direct into the ground without a plinth, are made of wattle and plastered with a thin lair of mud or cowdung. The eaves are sometimes continued outward so as to form a small verandah. One of the peculiarties of a Gond house is that admission can be gained only by one entrance leading from the high street of the village. This is closed at nights by a door of bamboo tatti, which is fixed to a *thunia* (pole) and can be fastened to the opposite door post by string made out of the "*mohpani*" tree. Behind the house is the garden or *bari*, and in front of it is the *angan* or courtyard containing the *madwa*, a slightly raised earthen platform floored with cowdung and used by the householder for drying mahua, khawar and vegetables of all kinds; on the right of the *angan* is sometimes a cattle shed, though the general practice is to stable the cattle in the house together with the family. The whole area—house, bari and angan—is fenced in with bamboos with an entrance on the main road.

The Average Working Day.

93. The average Gond working day begins at cock-crow or 4 A.M. At that hour the women rise and grind in an earthen mill sufficient grain for the day's food; the men rise at the same time (or in the off season an hour later), and take their cattle for a couple of hours' grazing. On their return at about 7·30 A.M., the Ahir milks the cows (an operation performed only once a day), and then takes them together with such of the cattle as are not required for the plough to the grazing ground. The men take the plough-cattle and all their implements of husbandry to the fields and commence their daily work. Meanwhile the women have cleaned the cattle sheds and deposited the manure on the back gardens, washed their hands and feet, brought water from the nallah and prepared the *pej* (thin kodon gruel) with vegetables; about 9 A. M., they feed the children from cups and platters of leaves. They repair to

the men in the fields with water, pej, and vegetables ; and the men, after cleaning their teeth and mouth, take the first meal of the day, called *murgal* or *murangal*, the women waiting until their men-folk have finished. The men will then smoke a pipe, while the women eat, after which they work together till noon, take an hour's rest, and then work on till 3 P. M., when the second meal or *marria* is taken, followed by another hour's joint work. The women then leave for home, gathering fuel and leaves for cups and platters on the way. On their return home they replenish the water vessels and commence preparing the evening meal, or *biyari*, the important meal of the day. The men meanwhile work on till sunset, after which they graze the cattle till dark and return home. Then they pen the cattle, wash their hands, mouth, and feet, smoke a pipe, and are ready for dinner. This is a more substantial meal than the others ; it consists of *kodai* (cleaned kodon) cooked as a '*bat*' or stiff porridge with vegetables, or if vegetables be unobtainable, liquid *urad* dal. The men and children dine together, but the women must wait until their husbands have finished. If there are crops to watch, children over 10 years of age and old men unfit for labour of a more strenuous kind are despatched in couples to the fields, where, perched on *mandwas* (or platforms) some 10 or 12 feet above the ground, they spend the night protecting the young crops from the sambhur, chithal, nilgai and pigs, that come to take toll of them. The watchers remain at their post till 4 A. M., at which hour the village wakes to life, and the daily routine begins again.

Food.

94. The food of a Mandla cultivator is of a very simple nature. The three meals of the day, *murgal*, *marria* and *biyari* take place about 9 A.M., 3 P.M., and 8 P.M., respectively. At the first in addition to the ordinary pej of kodai a quarter of a pound of bread is eaten. This bread is prepared from flour mixed with mahua, the mixture being boiled in the pej broth

7

or else baked after the fashion of a cake. The *bhaji* (vegetables) also taken with the *murgal* meal consist of the tender leaves of the pipar tree, gram leaves, *khamer* fruit, *gular*, or *rosalla*. The object of the vegetables is to make the meal more tasty, not that any spices are used in their preparation, but the young leaves or fruit are first dipped in some sour liquid such as the "*khari*" of gram, or, if this be unobtainable, in "*basi pej*," that is, pej kept for several days until it is quite sour and, as often as not, teeming with insect life. The *marria* or midday meal is similar to the *murgal*, but instead of bread boiled mahua is eaten. In the evening rice, kodon and dal (of masur) are eaten together with vegetables and wheat, or mahua, bread. On high days and holidays, the ordinary cultivator treats himself to small head-shaped "*muthias*" of gram flour fried sparingly in oil. Practically the whole range of flesh food from the tiger to the mouse is acceptable to the aboriginal palate, though he draws the line at two or three species of snake, the ordinary cock and a kind of sparrow known as *ghareli chidia*. Fish is eaten at the evening meal once a week; it is a very popular dish amongst the Gonds, who not only find it sustaining but also ascribe to it wonderful sight-protective properties. In times of scarcity they return to the primal food of edible roots (*kandas*).

Clothes.

95. The clothing of a Gond is extremely simple, consisting generally of a *pheta* or small piece of cloth to cover the head, and a *dhotie*, about five feet long and two feet broad. The most indigent, who cannot afford a dhotie, are content with a *langoti*, a scanty scrap of cotton worn as a waist-cloth. The more prosperous wear a *mirjai*, or cotton waistcoat; but this is only brought out on special occasions and does not form part of the daily wardrobe. In the rainy season a blanket, and in the cold months a *khor* (a thick country cloth doubled) are used as a protection against the weather. The Gonds do not waste much money in ornaments, a



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

IMAGE OF THE NERBUDDA AT MANDLA.

string of rupees round the neck or a couple of bronze or silver '*churas*' being the most common. Most men carry a *batuwa* or small bag divided into two compartments; in one side is kept tobacco, and in the other a *chakmak*, corresponding to our flint and steel. Attached to the bag is the one surgical instrument known to the Gonds, an iron nail flattened at one end for extracting thorns from their feet. The women wear a sari of white or red cloth but do not cover their heads. Their bodies are tattooed all over, not because they delight in the beauty of the pictures, but because they believe that unless they are tattooed the doors of the divine presence will be closed to them in the hereafter. By way of ornament they wear some five or six rows of glass beads round their necks and occasionally a string of four anna pieces, or even rupees. *Tarculas* (earrings), *maniari* (a flat piece of silver covering the ear), a silver neck-ring, half a dozen thin silver chains stretched from ear to ear and a comb of fine bamboos in the hair completes the decoration of the head. The wrists are loaded with glass bangles, and brass or bell-metal bracelets; the arms above the elbow carry a pair of bronze '*bohtas*' weighing about one pound, and the feet one or two pairs of brass or bell-metal anklets. The Gonds are not very particular about their personal appearance, and are at little pains to keep themselves and their clothing clean. It is only on the rare occasions when they go to market or attend a marriage that they think of washing their clothes; this they do by boiling them in a pot full of water and ashes over a fire, and then rinsing them in a neighbouring nallah.

LEADING FAMILIES.

The old Noblesse: Ojhas.

96. There are at present in Mandla some thirteen families who own estates of twelve or more villages. Many of these have been built up in recent years by clever and in some cases unscrupulous purchase and foreclosure, but there still survive one or two landholders, who can trace their title back to the days of the Garha-Mandla

dynasty. One of the most interesting of these families is that of Ballabhji Ojha, Brahman, which now holds an estate of twenty-three villages in the Haweli and Pathar tracts. The present head of the family, Ballabhji Ojha, is the tenth in succession since Bishwambhar Ojha migrated from Benares at the invitation of Hirde Shah, the Raja of Garha-Mandla, about the year A. D. 1650. Bishwambhar became steward of the royal household on a salary of Rs. 500 per month, and after his death the post was made hereditary. About the middle of the eighteenth century Rajah Nizam Shah conferred upon Loknath Ojha the post of sacrificial priest, and gave him the village Amadongri in jagir. When the Bhonslas took over Mandla from the Saugor Marathas, Loknath's son, Shubhankar, went to the Court at Nagpur and there performed a sacrifice in return for which he was given a large sum of money and some more villages in jagir. After the English occupation Mandla was made a Tahsil of Seoni district, and Shubhankar's son, Babuji Ojha, held the office of Tahsildar. This period marks the zenith of the family's prosperity. At the Settlement of 1868 the nine jagir villages were converted into ubari villages; since then the Ojhas have acquired three more under the Waste Land Sale rules and have purchased eleven in the ordinary way. At present the representative of the family, Pandit Ballabhji Ojha, holds twenty-three villages; it is said that he is slightly involved in debt, but he is a good landlord to his tenants, an enterprising agriculturist, and a worthy scion of the house to which he belongs.

Bajpais.

97. Another old family is that of the Bajpais, about whose early history we are unfortunately very ignorant. Being contemporary with the dawn of the Garha-Mandla kingdom its records are equally obscure. The illustrious Surbhi Pathak, who had assisted Jadurai to the throne of Garha-Mandla, came apparently from the United Provinces, and his descendants continued to keep in touch with the other

branch of the family. In the reign of Sangram Shah a member of one of these branches, a certain Kanlikar Pathak, left his home at Bilthari on the Ganges and came to Mandla, where he received a ready welcome from the Rajah. Two of his sons, Madhava and Gusaindas, assisted by the Rajah performed a "Bajpai" sacrifice, since when they and their descendants have always been known by the cognomen of Bajpais. The senior house of Madhava held high offices at court, its members being employed sometimes as ambassadors, sometimes as ministers, and sometimes as court historians. It is from their records that we have gleaned most of our knowledge of Garha-Mandla history. The house of Bajpai experienced many vicissitudes. In the reign of Nizam Shah a certain Raghubanshi Bajpai made the regrettable error of disagreeing with the queen-mother Rani Bilaskunwar on the choice of a successor to the throne. He and his family consisting of 125 persons met their death at the hands of the queen, save only some five or six members who managed to escape. One of the survivors, Purshottam Bajpai, was recalled by Rajah Narhar Shah and reinstated both in his jagir and his hereditary office. In the unsettled period that ensued, the Bajpais were the foremost in king-making and king-breaking, but, when the district passed into the hands of the English, they returned to more peaceful habits. One Ramkrishna Bajpai served as Naib-Tahsildar, and Pandit Bhairon Prasad Bajpai, a brother of his, is a well-to-do resident of Mandla. He is the present proprietor of the Bajpai estate and is much respected among his fellow citizens.

Another family that found its way into the district in ancient times is that of Chandrabhan. In the time of Nizam Shah a physician, by name Nilkanth, who came from Almora in the United Provinces, was appointed Court-physician. In recognition of his skill in this profession the Rajah conferred some villages upon him, which formed the nucleus of his estate. The post became hereditary in his family as long as the Gond dynasty continued, but after its break-up the family

lost its office and lived on the income of its villages. The most important of these is Maharajpur, a rich suburb of Mandla. Some of its members have received an English education and are now in Government service. Chandrabhan himself held a ministerial post under Government, but on the death of Dadnulal, the head of the family, he had to abandon it in order to look after the family property.

The Jamadars.

98. Ram Lal Jamadar, Brahman, of Korgaon is the proprietor of 103 villages including the Ghugri estate of 97 villages, which was escheated for rebellion from its Lodhi owners and conferred upon the grandfather of the present holder, a certain Lachmi Prasad, for services rendered during the Mutiny. Lachmi Prasad was a Native officer who came to the assistance of the British against the Rani of Ramgarh, and when the Ramgarh Taluq was confiscated, the estate of 97 villages was given to him in recognition of his loyalty. After his death the estate came into the possession of his two widows, Parbati Bai and Rukhma Bai, the latter of whom died shortly afterwards. Musammat Parbati Bai was thus left in sole control, but her management failed to satisfy either her tenants or her relatives. In September 1903 the estate was taken over by the Court of Wards. The present holder however, Ram Lal Jamadar, agreed to manage the estate, paying her a sum of Rs. 175 per month, and on the strength of this agreement the villages were relinquished by the Court of Wards in 1908. It is early days yet to comment upon the success of his management, but with regard to the villages that have been for some years directly under his control the proprietor has shown himself to be a keen cultivator and a fair landlord to his tenants.

Singarpore estate of Gaya Parshad Tiwari.

99. The founder of the Singarpore family, Saduram Brahman, originally hailed from Farukhabad. He left his home owing to a domestic quarrel and found his way to Jubbulpore, where he enlisted as a sepoy on Rs. 7

per month. When the Mutiny broke out in Mandla he was one of the Jubbulpore contingent sent to assist Captain Waddington, who was Deputy Commissioner at the time, and it is said that he rendered some personal assistance to him at the fight near Mandla town. In return for his assistance he was given the Singarpore Taluqa of 41 villages, and latter on was made an Honorary Magistrate and Durbari. Half the estate is now in the hands of Musammat Radha Bai, to whom it has just been given by the Court of Wards, and the other half is being managed with very moderate success by the present representative of the family, Gaya Parshad Tiwari.

The only other important Brahman family in the district is that of the brothers, Parwat Singh and Mukund Singh of Bijapur, Jubbulpore. They own a partitioned estate of 32 villages, including the Bamhni estate, of which they have recently recovered possession under a decree of the Privy Council. Both the brothers are well off, and make a considerable income out of their villages.

Jagganath Parshad Chowdhry.

100. The largest landowner in the district is Jagganath Parshad Chowdhry, Kalar, of Maharajpur, who is also the largest banker. His estate comprises 156 villages and shares, including 28 villages of the Raj-Gond estate of Mokas, on which he has recently foreclosed. At the Settlement of 1868 the family owned only 40 villages, and since then has acquired 18 under the Waste-Land rules, and the remainder by ordinary purchase or civil decrees. The greater part of it lies in the Mokas, Raigarh Bichchea, and open tracts, but the estate includes many other villages scattered sporadically in other parts of the district, all of which are managed by troops of agents, who conduct their business with more regard to profits than the interest of the villagers. Munnalal Chowdhry, the father of Jagganath Parshad, in 1897 made a generous gift in the cause of education. He deposited Government paper in the Treasury, the interest of which comes to Rs. 2187 per annum, for main-

taining an Anglo-Vernacular Middle School and two free Primary Schools in Mandla. He also gave the school buildings. In 1908 Jagganath Parshad offered to give a monthly subscription of Rs. 250 in aid of a High School, if one were built. His offer was accepted and an excellently equipped and organised High School is now the result. The founding of it was largely due to the efforts of the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Blakesley, who arranged its constitution and had a hostel built. The management is in the hands of a Committee with the Deputy Commissioner as President, and the school is a valuable and popular local institution. Jagganath Parshad has also founded a scholarship named after Mr. Blakesley and tenable by one of the students at the Jubbulpore College. He also maintains a Sanskrit Patshala at a cost of Rs. 250 per annum. In the Provincial Durbar, that was held in December 1912, Chowdhry Jagganath Parshad was given the title of Rai Bahadur. His annual income is estimated to be about half a lakh.

Other leading families of Mandla.

101. In Dindori Tahsil Thakur Shahzad Singh Lodhi,* Taluqdar of Shahpura, has an estate of 36 villages and nine shares, mostly lying in the west of the Tahsil. The majority of these villages are ancestral, but some are self-acquired; all however are under the management of a number of very indifferent agents, while the Taluqdar, who is well-off, lives in a manner consistent with the dignity of his title. A relative of his, by name Janardan Singh, owns 12 villages in the Shahpur group and is himself in fair circumstances, although his villages are not overprosperous. In the Raigarh Bichchea tract lies the Dei estate of Mussammat Faqr-ul-nisa Begum, a member of the family of the Sohagpore Maulavi, by whom the estate was acquired. Thirty-five villages were once included in it, all of them desolate and mismanaged. Of late years the firm of Jiwan

* The story of this man's ancestry is recorded in the Appendix under "Ramgarh."

Dass, Jubbulpore, obtained a decree against the estate, which necessitated the sale of fourteen or fifteen villages. Of these nine were acquired by Government in 1911. In the extreme east of Dindori the Raj-Gond, Tok Singh, has an estate of 12 villages, all that is left of a much larger estate, which the folly and incompetence of his relatives had dissipated. By business-like methods he has saved this much from the wreckage and is now in fairly substantial circumstances.

Jubbulpore Families. Rajah Gokul Dass.

102. Some 89 villages, known as the Lakhanpur and Maneri Estates in the north of Mandla Tahsil, belong to D. B. Bullubhdass and R. B. Jiwandass, the two heirs of the late Rajah Gokul Dass. The home of the family was once at Jaisalmir in Rajputana, but Seth Basanthram, the great-great-grandfather of the Rajah, migrated to Jubbulpore and acquired land in the neighbourhood some time before the establishment of the British Government in these parts. The history of the family is one long record of acts of generosity and loyalty, especially in times of stress. During the Mutiny Seth Sewaram advanced money for the purchase of the bullock-train, which enabled the relief column to start from Allahabad to the disaffected regions of Cawnpore and Lucknow. In 1885, when relations were strained on the frontier and war with Russia seemed imminent, Gokul Dass wrote to the Chief Commissioner :—" We are quite willing to "assist the Government in obtaining and forwarding to the " front a couple of lakhs of wheat and gram, or, if the Govern-" ment would prefer it, we would maintain, say, 500 men for " a year to be sent either to the front, or to be kept here to " relieve others to be sent to the front." On the occasion of the South African war the Rajah gave a subscription of Rs. 1,000 towards the war fund. Of charitable gifts to the town of Jubbulpore there is no end, the greatest being one of over Rs. 30,000 towards the building of a Town Hall. Another Rs. 2,000 was given for improving the Hanuman Tank, large sums to the Elgin and other Hospitals, and

Rs. 10,000 to the Indian Charitable Relief Fund during the famine of 1900. The title of Rajah was conferred on Gokul Dass in 1889 in recognition of his generosity with regard to the Jubilee of 1887. He also remitted vast sums of debts owed him by his tenantry in Saugor and Balaghat, while in Seoni and Hoshangabad he advanced money at easy rates to some large estates which were on the verge of insolvency, and thereby rescued them from dissolution. The Diwan Bahadur, his nephew, has followed in his footsteps, remitting in 1908 five-sixths of the debts owed to him by tenants in Mandla district. The actual sum forgiven by the creditor was Rs. 52,400, the residue being such that the debtors will be able to pay it off in the course of some years. The Diwan Bahadur is now President of Jubbulpore Municipality and is a highly respected citizen of that city. The name of his uncle, the Rajah, has been perpetuated by a memorial erected in his honour by grateful citizens at a cost of about quarter of a lakh. This memorial, which was formally opened by the Chief Commissioner in 1911, is in the form of an Indian rest-house, and is known as the "Rajah Gokul Dass Dharmsala."

Beohar Raghbir Singh.

103. Another Jubbulpore family is that of Beohar Raghbir Singh, Kayasth, who own 38 villages in Mandla, mainly in the Narainganj and Mokas tracts. Most of this property is ancestral, but, as Beohar Raghbir Singh lives in Jubbulpore, it is managed on his behalf by a number of agents. The estate was for some time under the management of the Court of Wards, and, when it was handed over to the present proprietor on his attaining his majority, it was still heavily burdened with debt. By strict economy and sound business principles he has succeeded in reducing this very materially, and may now be considered wealthy. His villages lie chiefly in the neighbourhood of Narainganj, where the soil is rich and profits excellent. He is a generous man and has lately made a handsome donation towards a new Dispensary, which is being built at Narainganj.

CHAPTER IV.

AGRICULTURE.

SOILS.

System of Classification.

104. At the Settlement of 1910 the classification of soils was based to a very large extent on the opinions of the cultivators whom Mr. H. F. E. Bell, the Settlement Officer, considered on account of their actual experience to be more reliable authorities on this subject than a whole library of geological treatises. So far as possible, allowing for local variations, the local nomenclature of soils was adopted, and in fixing the relative value of the soils the greatest weight was given to local enquiry and opinion. Four general classes of soils were popularly recognised, *kābar* or *kanhar*, *morand* or *mund*, *sahra* and *barra*; but as differences in value within these classes were also recognised, each was sub-divided into two, and the following classification was adopted :—

Kabar I.

105. *Kabar I** is a bluish-black "black cotton" clay, of extreme depth and fertility, soft and sticky when wet, very hard and heavy when dry. It is free from sand and stone, and breaks with a smooth surface. *Kabar I* fields are very retentive of moisture and can do without the winter rains, but on the other hand often suffer from excessive cloud or moisture ; on drying the soil cracks into characteristic abrupt fissures of great depth. It is commonest in the Haweli and Pathar, and will grow either wheat or rice, but is more naturally a wheat soil. Locally it is known as *gobra*, *bari kanhar*, *asli kanhar*, and *kichua kabar*.

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* The following soil-classification is quoted direct from the Settlement Report, 1910.

Kabar II.

106. *Kabar II* is an inferior quality of the preceding, more gritty, lighter in colour, less in depth, and often containing small black *kankar* pebbles. It is found chiefly in the Haweli and Pathar, and is suitable for either wheat or rice; but both classes of *kabar* are somewhat liable to water-logging and rust. It is locally known as *gobra*, *nan kanhar*, *choti* or *halki kanhar*, *dudh sahra*, and *mutsahra* or *mota sahra*.

Mund I.

107. *Mund I* is the third of the four classes of black cotton soil, black or darkish, more gritty and friable than *kabar*, and breaking into small clods with a roughish surface. It frequently contains more or less white limestone (*kankar*) pebbles of fair size. It is suitable for all crops, and rice is usually followed by an *utera*-sown crop of pulse or linseed. It is locally known as *mund*, *morand*, *sahra*, *kaitha* and occasionally *mutsahra*.

Mund II.

108. *Mund II* is an inferior variety of the preceding, lighter in colour and outturn, more sandy and often containing large quantities of white limestone which materially reduces its productivity. It is suitable for all crops, but is comparatively rarely double-cropped. In the east of Dindori both classes of *mund* are often found of a pale-yellow and reddish colour, but seem to lose nothing in fertility thereby. It is locally known as *morandi*, *sahri* or *domatia*.

Khisa Sahra.

109. *Khisa sahra* is a pure sand, pale yellow, friable and easily worked, unfit for *rabi* or spring crops, but given good rains the rice soil *par excellence*; in low-lying or irrigated positions and with proper manuring it gives extraordinarily good outturns. Otherwise it is very poor, and much high-lying and unembanked soil of this description is classed as *barra*, to which it is inferior in its outturn of light kharif.

Kaitha Sahra.

110. *Kaitha sahra*, locally known as *domatia*, is a very sandy variety of *mund* suited only to lighter rabi, but a fairly good rice

soil, and is sometimes double-cropped with *utera*-sown pulses. It is on the whole inferior to *khisa sahra*, but is less liable to drought. Both varieties of *sahra* are common only in the rice tracts, and are practically not found at all in Dindori or the north of Mandla ; but the eastern half of the Chapartala group is almost entirely a rather coarse kind of *sahra* capable with protection and proper cultivation of producing excellent crops of rice, but at present devoted to the production of inferior and insecure crops of light millets. This class of soil is locally known as *jhigra sahra* or *jhigra*.

Mutbarra.

111. *Mutbarra* is not a specific soil, but a comprehensive term applied to the best qualities of red or yellow soil, free from stone, capable only of kharif crops. It is also applied to the poorer qualities of black soil, which are too shallow or scoured to admit of regular rabi crops.

Barra.

112. *Barra* is a similarly all-embracing term including all the poorest soils incapable of rabi or rice. True *barra* is a red gravelly or murram soil, often extraordinarily stony or with rock underlying it within twelve or eighteen inches. Large expanses of good level red *barra* are usually found on the *dadars* or flat tops of hills, so common in this district. Given good rains it is the best soil for kodon, kutki and til, and also for back gardens. But poor *sahra* devoted to minor crops has also been classed as *barra*, and is a very poor and insecure soil.

Kachar.

113. *Kachār* is the rich yellow flaky deposit left after the rains on the banks of the Nerbudda and Banjar rivers. It is very rare and is almost entirely devoted to garden crops, but fine crops of wheat are occasionally grown on it. The term *kachar* or *kachrot* is often applied by cultivators to ordinary riverine *barra* subject to fertilization by occasional inundation ; but this class is not common, and though extraordinarily fertile

for minor crops was not separately classified at the last settlement, but included, according to ascertained value, in one of the higher classes.

Kind classes.

114. The soil-classes enumerated above are distributed into four "kind" classes according to the crop which is normally grown upon them. The "kind" classes are *gohari* or wheat land, *dhanai* or rice land, *mutfarikat* or minor cropped land, and, fourthly, garden land. The approximate area of *gohari* land is 121,000 acres, of *dhanai* 53,000 acres, of *mutfarikat* 386,000 acres, and of garden land 19,000 acres. But owing to the semi-developed nature of large tracts of Mandla District this classification by "kinds" can be by no means a final one, as much land that is at present classed as *mutfarikat*, will with the adoption of intensive cultivation be capable of producing wheat or rice.

Position-classes of wheat-land.

115. As the outturn of similar soil-classes varies very considerably according to the position of the fields, it was necessary at the time of Settlement to adopt a third classification by position. Wheat-land was classified into five such positions: low-lying or *dol*, retaining moisture for a considerable period; *mamuli* or ordinarily level and productive; *bharkila*, which is sloping land damaged by water-channels; *tagar*, sloping land which rapidly loses its moisture and is drained by water of some of its richness; *bandhia* or *bandhan*, which is land improved by embankment. Of these the *dol* and *bharkila* positions are recognised only in Mandla Tahsil, the rest are universal over the district.

Position-classes of rice-land.

116. There are three position-classes of rice-land: *jhilan* or low-lying land holding up a quantity of water and also receiving water from a neighbouring tank or higher lands; *saman* or perfectly level land; and *tikra*, high-lying land with a well pronounced slope.

117. With regard to its position Garden-land is classed either as the ordinary unirrigated village back garden, growing maize, tobacco, and chillies *(bari barani geonra)*, or as irrigated sugar gardens (*santa bari*), or as irrigated vegetable gardens (*marar bari*).

Garden-land and mutafarikat.

Mutfarikat is not distributed into position classes at all.

All four kinds, however, wheat, rice, *mutfarikat* and garden-lands are subject to the following modifications ; they may be *abpashi*, that is, irrigated, though this is generally confined to rice, sugar and vegetable gardens ; or *geonra*, that is, close to the village and fertilised by its drainage ; or *ujarha*, that is, close to forests and subjected to the depredations of wild beasts.

118. In order to arrive at a proper and proportionate valuation of the various kinds and positions of soils, the usual soil factor system was used. Ordinary wheat growing first-class mund *(Mund I, gohari mamuli)* was given the factor 32, and working from this basis the following scale of factors was adopted; in the "ordinary" position wheat growing Kabar I was given a factor 48 and Kabar II 40, Mund I 32 and Mund II 24. The *bandhia* and *dol* positions were given proportionately higher factors, while the *tagar* and *bharkila* were more lightly assessed. For *geonra* lands 25 per cent. was added to the soil and position factor and for *ujarha* lands 33 cent. was deducted. Except that the *dol* and *bharkila* positions in Dindori Tahsil were merged in the *ordinary* and *tagar* respectively, this scale of factors was adopted for practically the whole district. As regards rice lands Kabar I in the jhilan position was given the factor 69, Kabar II 58, Mund I 48, Mund II 33, Khisa sahra 60, Kaitha sahra 48, the inferior positions being correspondingly valued and considerable enhancement being made in the case of *geonra* and irrigable lands. To garden-lands

Soil-factors.

were given factors varying from 88 to 56, while *mutfarikat* varied from 38 to 4, 40 per cent. being subtracted for *ujarha* localities. In backward tracts however such as the plough-rented groups of Ghugri and Chapartala, the Mokas, and the Shahpur groups, a much simplified scale of factors was adopted. Excluding their village gardens only four soil-classes are recognised by these aboriginals. The best of these *Gohari* I or *Bahra* was given the factor 19, Gohari II was given the factor 12, and the rest with the exception of the richly fertilised gardens which were valued at 56, were given the factor 4.

Statistics of cultivation.

119. The total area of Mandla District amounts to 5089 square miles, of which 1914 square miles, or 37 per cent. are included in Government Forest. There are two kinds of tenure for purposes of cultivation, the *Malguzari* and the *Ryotwari*, the former being spread over 2303 square miles, and the latter over 795 square miles. The remaining 77 miles comprise what is known as the waste land purchase, that is to say, are sold outright and are free of revenue. The land held in malguzari tenure at present amounts to more than fifteen lakhs of acres, the ryotwari to about five lakhs; almost exactly half of these areas, that is, about ten lakhs in all, is occupied for cultivation. At the Regular Settlement of 1868 the total amount of occupied land was three and a half lakhs, and by the Settlement of 1888 it had risen to a little more than five lakhs. A comparison of these figures shows clearly the very great progress that has been made of late years; they cannot however be taken as an absolutely true criterion, as the Regular Settlement is known to be materially wrong in certain of its figures, especially with regard to fallows; if due allowance be made for these errors, the fact remains that since the year 1868 the occupied area in malguzari tenure has increased by 70 or 80 per cent., and the cultivated area by about 65 per cent.

120. At the time of Mr. Bell's Settlement, announced in 1910, the total village area amounted to twenty lakhs of acres distributed thus :—

Relation of occupied to non-occupied area.

	Net Cropped.	New fallow.	Old fallow.	Occupied.	Non-Occupied.
Malguzari ...	505,624	187,715	93,974	787,313	736,354
Ryotwari ...	165,256	21,570	47,229	234,055	289,023
Total ...	670,880	209,285	141,203	1,021,368	1,025,377

In malguzari villages the proportion of occupied area to waste is larger than in the less advanced ryotwari tracts. The groups however vary largely; in the Niwari tract 65 per cent. is occupied and 54 per cent. is cropped, while in the desolate Chapartala group the occupied and cropped areas are respectively 26 and 17 per cent. only of the whole. Over half the unoccupied area of ryotwari villages and about a third of the malguzari waste, or about 400,000 acres in all, is culturable, particularly in the Ghugri and Raigarh Bichchea tracts of the Mandla Tahsil, where wide stretches of black soil of excellent quality still await subjugation. The northern tracts, a tangled mass of hills and gorges, offer no hope of cultivation. Of the whole unoccupied area some 560,000 acres are covered with forest, the produce of which, especially the mahua and harra trees, provide a steady miscellaneous income to the malguzars.

121. From the figures shown above it is seen that the area under fallow both old and new amounts to about 350,000 acres, which gives a proportion of 34 per cent. of the total occupied area. This figure represents the average of five years, in one of which occurred an almost complete failure of the kharif crops with its consequent effect on the following rabi

Fallows.

sowings ; the proportion of 34 per cent. is therefore abnormally high, and cannot be taken as a really accurate estimate.

Cropping and Double cropping.

122. In the year 1868 the net cropped area of the two Tahsils, Mandla and Dindori, amounted to rather less than 350,000 acres. Twenty years after this area had increased by a lakh, and at the present time it has reached to very nearly seven lakhs. Taking the average of the six years 1901-1902 to 1906-1907, the area double cropped is exactly 50,000 acres. In 1904-1905 when the rabi area reached a particularly high figure 60,000 acres were double cropped. In a normal season however, given fair September rains, practically all the black soil rice crop is double cropped, the best and heaviest land being generally sown with a second crop of wheat. This often gives nearly as good an outturn as single cropped wheat land. The poorer soil is sown with rabi pulses and linseed, sometimes by plough (*bota*) and sometimes by the more reckless method of throwing the seed at haphazard into the water at the roots of the still standing rice crop, the method known as *utera*.

Methods of agriculture.

123. There is nothing peculiar about the methods of agriculture followed, which are those of other districts, due allowance being made for the natural indolence of the aboriginal character. This results in a decided preference for the sowing of light crops, a tendency to shifting cultivation, the substitution wherever possible of the *bakhar* or paring harrow for the *hal* or plough, and a lower standard of efficiency generally. Mr. Bell is of the opinion that the cause of this backwardness, which is reflected in the better castes of cultivators also, is climatic ; the district is notoriously an unhealthy one for natives, and men who spend an appreciable portion of the year shivering under their blankets with attacks of fever and ague cannot be expected to display during the rest the sturdy industry of their more

favourably situated brethren. Not that the amount of cultivation required for a lesser millet is by any means trivial or easy. Take the case of *kodon*, the principal food grain of the district. To obtain a bumper crop, the soil must be twice ploughed with the *nāgar* in the hot weather. It is then dressed with the *bakhar* either once or twice as opportunity may offer, and after the rains have broken the seed is sown broadcast at the rate of ten to sixteen pounds per acre. A third *bakharing* is required to cover the seed in the seed bed and a fourth, if the land is covered with grass. When the plants have reached a height of about six inches, the field is once hand-weeded. Two or three days after cutting the plants are carried to the threshing floor and built up into a rick. Should rain happen to pierce the grass thatching of the rick, the seed will be useless for next year's sowing. The superficial cultivation of the Baigas, known as the *bewar* method, has already been described in Chapter III. This system is practised by a very small proportion of the population, even the Baigas themselves beginning to abandon it in favour of the more usual methods. In his heart of hearts the Baiga is not a keen, cultivator of the soil, but prefers the easily-won produce of the forest to that of the fields.

124. Mandla cultivators hold to no definite principles of crop-rotation. Rice is sown in the same plots year after year. A certain muafidar of Bokar pointed out fields to Captain Ward in 1868, which, he said, had been cultivated with rice ever since the village had been in his family; and his possession dated back one hundred and fifty years. In the Pathar however wheat-land is occasionally allowed to lie fallow, or is sown with a crop of hemp, and if any field has been exhausted by a very prolific crop of wheat, gram is sown as a recuperator. No fixed principles however are observed, the native having implicit confidence in the eternal inexhaustible richness of the Kabar soil.

Rotation of crops.

Crop statistics.

125. The progress of the areas under different crops can be seen by comparing the figures for 1908 with the average areas of the six years 1901-02 to 1906-07 :—

Crop.	Average of 1901-02 to 1906-07.	1908-09.
	Acres.	Acres.
Rice	102,859	103,474
Kodo-Kutki ...	270,350	280,267
Til	46,539	33,480
Jagni	44,616	56,307
Total kharif ...	518,463	547,987
Wheat with share of birra ...	100,412	68,719
Gram with share of birra ...	54,504	77,712
Total Rabi ...	191,505	201,185

It will be seen that the kharif-sown area is two and a half times as much as the area under rabi. Some sort of idea of the value of these crops can be conveyed by the statement, that, all expenses being deducted, the net profit to the cultivator on rice, wheat, and kodon amounts to Rs. 10, Rs. 8, and Rs. 3-8 or Rs. 4 per acre respectively. An acre of sugar-cane cultivation, if double-cropped, brings in a net profit of Rs. 21.

Crops.

Wheat.

126. Previous to the famine year of 1894, with the exception of kodon, which was grown for home consumption only, wheat (*Triticum sativum*) was the most important product of Mandla. But the whole of wheat cultivation suffered a sharp set-back in the disastrous years, which marked the close of the nineteenth century, and it is only recently that

this crop has recovered its pride of place. In the year 1906 seventeen per cent. of the net cropped area of the district was under wheat, and there is every reason to believe that this percentage is increasing annually. The principal varieties grown are *Galalia*, *Kathia*, *Bansi*, (which belong to the sub-species "durum" and are macaroni wheats) and *Mundi*, *Parhari*, and *Sukarhai* (which are "bread" wheats and belong to the sub-species "vulgare"). The "bread" wheats are of far more importance commercially; *Sukarhai* has a soft white grain, and is exported to the United Kingdom in large quantities, as its flour has the valuable quality of producing an exceedingly white bread. *Parhari* has a small, rather hard, yellow grain, and is a "strong" wheat. It is grown more particularly on the light soils of Dindori Tahsil, and is bought by one or two Indian firms for export to Jeddah and other parts of Arabia. Fields of wheat mixed with gram are comparatively uncommon, being practically confined to the north of the district; in 1906-07 only one-fifth of the wheat sown was mixed. In Dindori Tahsil a field is generally sown one year with wheat, next year with gram. The standard outturn is reckoned to be 580 lbs. to the acre; but this is an under-estimate, as a series of experiments have given an average outturn of 650 lbs. Wheat is very rarely irrigated, and practically never manured; it requires some three or four breaks in the June, July, August and September rains, to allow of liberal ploughings, light showers in October to keep moist the seed-beds on the higher levels, one shower to settle the seed after sowing, about an inch of Christmas rain, and, from then to reaping, clear dry weather without frost.

The enemies of wheat.

127. The principal disease, which wheat is heir to, is rust (*girua*), which attacks the richer and low-lying lands, if there is an excess of rain in the cold-weather months, followed by cloudy weather. It is caused by the fungus "*Puccinia*," and two species of it are found in this district, "*Puccinia*

graminis" or black rust, and "*Puccinia glumarum*" or yellow rust. The complete life-cycle of this fungus in India is not yet known, but rust occurs every year, only however causing serious damage when heavy rains followed by cloudy weather occur in January and February. Black rust is mainly seen in the ears and stems, while yellow rust is chiefly confined to the leaves, which look as though they were covered with little yellow pustules; the latter consist of myriads of spores, which spread about and infect other plants under favourable conditions. In black rust the pustules are much larger and longer, and the spores are the colour of iron rust.

Smut (*kajli*) is another enemy of wheat. It is caused by the fungus "*Ustilago*," the spores of which are very small and black. If the wheat grain is sown with one of these spores attached to it, the fungus and the shoot grow up together, and when the wheat comes into ear, the ovaries are filled with the black spores of the fungus; if seed from a smutted field is soaked for a few minutes in a weak solution of copper sulphate (blue stone), the spores are killed and the seed is rendered perfectly good for sowing. Other enemies of wheat are frost, which follows heavy rain in January or February, drought, white ants, field-rats, birds, deer and antelope. The time of sowing is generally about the occasion of the Dasehra Festival, but the ancient Gonds, whose knowledge of the calendar was always vague and uncertain, used to wait until the secretion in the wild *urad* had lost its moisture before beginning their wheat sowing.

Rice.

128. After wheat the most important crop is rice (*Oryza sativa*). The normal rice area is just over a lakh of acres, 80,000 acres being sown regularly every year, and the balance cultivated irregularly or in rotation. Only about four per cent. of this whole area is transplanted, irrigation facilities in the *sahra* tracts being limited. But when the monsoon is late, a modified form of transplantation known as "*lehi*

is practised; the rice is artificially germinated in darkness for about four days, and then thrown broad-cast into fields, of which the soil has been puddled into thin mud. It is, however, a risky process and unless heavy rain follows shortly after sowing, the crop is lost. Another method in common use is to sow the seed broadcast, and, when the seedlings are a few inches above the ground, to drive a plough over the field and thin them out. The rice's deadliest foe is the "*illi*," a slender green insect which attacks it in August and September, if there is a prolonged and cloudy break in the rains; then nothing but heavy rain can save the crop. This insect is the rice bug (*Leptocorisa varicornis*), and it causes injury by sucking the sap of the developing ears. Nearly as destructive as the *illi* are the herds of deer and antelope, which browse upon the young seedlings. The ancient Gondi song of Lingo* tells of how "when the rain had poured for three days, the weather became fair; rice began to spring; all the fields appeared green. In one day the rice grew a finger's breadth in height, and in a month it rose to a man's knee. There were sixteen scores of antelope, among whom two bucks, uncle and nephew, were chief. When the scent of the rice spread abroad, they came to know it: thither they went to graze. With cracking joints the nephew arose; he leaped on high. With two ears upright and with cheerful heart, he bounded towards his uncle, and said, Someone has a beautiful field of rice: it must be green tender fodder. . . . . So he being in front gave a bound, and was in the midst of the rice, and stood; then all the deer came after him leaping. . . ." The story then relates how the cultivators came to their field and "saw only black soil, only rice stubble appearing."

Kodon-Kutki.

129. Kodon (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*) and Kutki (*Panicum psilopodium*) are the staple food of the aboriginal tribes. They are

* Hislop's Translation.

sown on all soils, but flourish best on red *barra*; and they are most largely cultivated in the east and north, where the aboriginal races chiefly dwell. Kodon is a most exhausting crop, and two years of it on yellow soil necessitate an equal period of fallow. The normal area under these crops is 250,000 acres, the average outturn being at least 550 lbs. to the acre, that is 100 lbs. more than the standard outturn.

Kodon is of two kinds, the first of which is called Bhadeli, though it is cut, not in Bhādon but in Kuār (September), and the second Katkai, which is cut, not in Kātīk but in Agan or Pus (December or January). Bhadeli has the longer seed and is dark in colour, while Katkai is smaller and slightly reddish. The grain is made into gruel for food, the water in which it is boiled (pej) being drunk for the morning meal and the porridge eaten at night. Unlike other districts Mandla people do not consider kodon grain at all poisonous. All that they admit is that, if snakes are seen in any number scurrying from a kodon field, the grain of that field will make them who eat it a little lightheaded; but this effect is considered rather an advantage that otherwise in the eyes of an aboriginal.

Til.

130. Til (*Sesamum indicum*) normally covers an area of rather less than 50,000 acres, the produce being carried away to Jubbulpore by packmen. Practically only the kharif variety is sown, though there is a slight tendency for the rabi til (*maghai*, *magheli*) to increase in villages near the railway line.

Gram.

131. Gram (*Cicer arietinum*) is a fairly important crop, especially in the Dindori Tahsil, where it is a second kist rent payer. Its value as a recuperative crop is well known, but only a small proportion of the wheat of this district is sown mixed with gram. The average area, including birra, amounts to about fifty or sixty thousand acres. Cloudy weather brings in an attack of "*illi*" or the gram caterpillar (*Chloridea obsoleta*) which bites holes in the young plants and eats the seeds.

132. Hemp (*San*) very largely takes the place of oil seeds as a rent-paying crop amongst the aboriginals of the Pathar. It is also grown to some extent in the Bijegaon and Ramnagar groups, but elsewhere is practically unkown. Owing to the improvement of communications, the rise in prices, and the practically unlimited demand, the area under hemp has been increasing steadily, and now it grows on more than 20,000 acres. Pindrai, where there are two private bale presses, is the market of the crop; a good season's hemp will show a profit of Rs. 15 or Rs. 20 per acre. It is grown chiefly by aboriginals, Hindus having alleged caste prejudices against polluting themselves with its cultivation; as the profits however continue to increase the caste prejudices are slowly dissolving and more and more Hindus are growing hemp each year.

Hemp.

133. Linseed (*Linum usitatissimum*) is another rent-paying oilseed of some importance. It is sown all over the district; but its extreme susceptibility to frost, rust, and clouds prevent it from becoming a really popular crop in spite of the splendid prices that it now fetches. There are two kinds, the common linseed with a pretty blue flower and red seed, the blossoms of which give the field a lake-like appearance; and in the Pathar a white-flowered variety with a white seed; this however is not very popular and shows no promise of ousting the other variety. In 1908-1909 the area under linseed rose to the extraordinarily high figure of 15,000 acres, more than twice the average area of the six preceding years.

Linseed.

134. Sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum*) is confined to the land along the Nerbudda, Banjar, Surpang and Matiari rivers in the open country round Mandla, where water is easily available. Except for the industrious Marar, Kachi and Kurmi castes the farmers rarely have the energy to grow it,

Sugarcane.

and the competition of foreign sugar is causing a decline in its cultivation. The *barahi* variety is generally grown; it is always irrigated, and, if it escapes the ravages of drought, white ants, caterpillars aud cattle, it turns out a profitable crop to the cultivator. The labour of irrigation by *mot* however and the delicate character of the crop is making it unpopular with the indolent Mandla peasantry; the area is already reduced to less than 500 acres, which is 30 per cent. only of the area under sugarcane in the year 1868.

Jagni and Mustard.

135. The aboriginal tribes derive considerable profit from the cultivation of Jagni or Ramtil (*Guzotia abyssinica*) and mustard. The former is a cheap and hardy oilseed which thrives best on black soils, and also does well in *barra*; it is often sown mixed with kodon, but alone covers some 56,000 acres. Mustard, the area of which is ordinarily about 13,000 acres, is sown mainly as a second crop in aboriginal backgardens after *maka* (maize), and occasionally on *kachrot* (inundated) land along river and nallah beds.

Pān.

136. Pān is grown in four villages in Mandla, of which Khairi and Hirdenagar are the most important. At Hirdenagar the *pan* gardens are built on three sides of the great Asrar Tank. The ground of each garden slopes sharply from the centre to both sides, the walls are of grass hurdles, the roof of leaves interwoven with bamboos. Inside are rows and rows of bamboo trellises, about 30 inches apart from each other, upon which climbs the betel vine. The vines are daily watered by hand from wells dug on the further side of the garden from the tank; the only manure given is oilcake. A regular rotation of planting is observed; after three years' growth the vines are cut down, and cuttings from a two year old vine are planted in their place. The plants are very delicate; for besides being subject to the ravages of the *Bamni* caterpillar, *ranga* (rust) and other diseases, they require the most careful graduation of air, light and water. The

cultivators, known as Pansaris or Barais, form an independent community, the descendants of some Rewah immigrants. They are rather troublesome neighbours, as they think nothing of digging a kachcha well in someone else's field, in order to irrigate their gardens. Three kinds of pan are known, *bangla*, *bangli* and *kapurí*, of which *bangla* is the most common and *bangli* the most prized. In the Khairi gardens only the *bangla* variety is grown. In Hirdenagar the pan-growers pay a rent of Rs. 32-4 per acre, in Khairi (which is separated from Keolari, the principle market, by the Nerbudda) the rent is only Rs. 20-0.

Agricultural Implements.

137. The principle instruments of cultivation are the *hal* or plough, and the *bakhar* or paring harrow. The *hal* is fitted with either a light share for barra and sahra soils or a heavy share for black soil. The plough is of the kind used in Jubbulpore and the north of the Province generally. It is supremely simple in construction, the woodwork being made by any handy cultivator and the iron by the village smith. It consists of a beam about nine feet long, which serves as a shaft, and a body of some stout wood (usually *tinsa*), to which the shoe or bed of the share (*nās*) is attached. The iron share (*phār*), a narrow strip of metal sharpened to a point, is firmly affixed to the front of the *nās* in such a way that its point slightly overlaps the end of the wood. The plough weighs only a few pounds and can easily be carried from field to field. It cuts a furrow four or five inches in depth, but only tears the surface of the field; it cannot invert the soil after the fashion of an English plough. When used for wheat crops a tube or *nāri* is attached to the plough, through which the seed falls into the furrow made by the share. The *bakhar* is fitted with a share or *pans* and is used for breaking down the clods already ploughed up or for rooting up stubble. The other instruments used are the *kānta* or spud, the *kulhāri*

or axe and the *hassia*, a short handled sickle. The winnowing is done in a basket known as a "*supha.*"

138. It is only in the Haweli, or rice tract, that any great value is placed upon manure. There it is pitted or collected and liberally spread over the rice lands, especially on *sahra* soil. But in the Pathar and aboriginal tracts, except for the small proportion thrown upon the highly manured back-gardens, cattle droppings are either used as fuel or washed away by the first rain.

Manure.

IRRIGATION.

139. In Dindori Tahsil irrigation is almost unknown; in Mandla Tahsil it is very little practised, although there is ample scope for it in the sandy rice lands along the Banjar and in the Chapartala tracts. Wheat seldom either requires or gets irrigation, only 71 acres being so recorded in 1910. Much of the land recorded as irrigable at the time of Settlement consists of sugar, *pan*, and vegetable gardens, the total area of which was 2324 acres, 1352 acres being actually irrigated. There is very little regular irrigation of rice; it is in fact confined to the spasmodic cutting of a few well-situated tanks when the later monsoon fails. In the year 1907, when the rains failed in September (a rainfall of 4 inches only being recorded in that month), the number of acres irrigated was 1,736, of which 1,295 acres were irrigated from wells and 51 from tanks. In 1908, when the rains were satisfactory, irrigation was confined to only 1,205 acres, including garden and wheat land.

Irrigation.

140. With the exception of the regular embankment of the Haweli rice lands the cultivators are very loth to take up land improvement. They maintain that the black soil of the district is only "kachcha," that is to say, is of such a character that embankments made of it are easily washed down and cost more to repair them than they are worth. Add to this the

Embankments.

natural indolence of the cultivators who are always trying to reduce their labour to a minimum, and the fatal memory that low-lying embanked-lands suffer most severely from rust and frost, and it is not to be wondered at that the making of embankments has not been enthusiastically adopted. In three limited tracts however kachcha soil embankments have been made; these are the villages along the Nerbudda, west of the Jubbulpore Road, where the embankments are of a very substantial type; the Narayanganj track of 12 or 15 villages, the black soil of which was embanked by some immigrant Lodhis who brought the custom with them from Jubbulpore; and the Niwas tract of Dindori, where the making of substantial embankments still progresses among the Lodhi and Brahman cultivators. The total embanked area of the district is 9655 acres; of this 4448 acres, or practically half, falls into these three tracts and the rest is scattered over the remainder of the district, a field here and a field there.

In ryotwari villages a certain amount of embanking is done by well-to-do ryots, who take taccavi loans for the purpose. A large number of stone terraces have also been built across the smaller nallahs; these offer no impediment to the water, but check to a very large extent the annual carrying off of silt. The nallahs quickly fill up and afford the very best of soil for cultivation.

CATTLE.

Agricultural cattle.

141. The agricultural stock is numerous but poor. Considering the almost unlimited grazing of excellent quality available in a large part of the district this is *prima facie* a matter for some surprise; but it is capable of easy explanation, if it be remembered that many of the bullocks are bred and sold by the Gonds of Raigarh Bichchea, whose low standard of cultivation does not require a sturdy breed of bullocks, and that as often as not the aboriginal cultivators yoke their cows to the plough, thereby further deteriorating the breed.

Buffaloes are seldom used for ploughing except in east Dindori, and even there but sparingly.

Statistics.

142. The total number of plough-cattle recorded in 1910 was 101,081, while the total number of cattle in the district was 402,651. The number of ploughs being about 46,000, it is clear that, apart from quality, the cultivators are distinctly well off for cattle. In the more open and closely cultivated tracts, where grazing is limited, the farmers keep no more cattle than are absolutely necessary for the work of cultivation ; in the less advanced tracts however, particularly in Raigarh Bichchea, comparatively unsubstantial tenants usually keep ten or twelve head and make a little profit by the sale of an occasional bullock to low-country buyers ; while many of the more substantial Gonds own thirty or forty head of bullocks and cows, and perhaps a dozen buffaloes.

Ramgarhi and Raigarh Bichchea cattle.

143. The cattle of the eastern parts of Dindori are known as Ramgarhis ; they enjoy throughout the district a reputation for extra power and endurance, and a private cattle farm for the preservation of a pure stock of this breed has lately been established by the Court of Wards near Mandla. It is highly probable that they are not an independent stock, but the result of a fusion of a well known Rewah breed with the local variety. In Raigarh Bichchea also there is a special breed of cattle and the graziers of that tract drive a thriving trade by the sale of them, people coming from as far as Chhindwara and Berar to purchase. Practically no cattle are imported, as only the indigenous breed can survive the rains.

Prices.

144. It is popularly supposed that the price of cattle has doubled since the year 1868, and the village elders stoutly maintain that a pair of bullocks could then be purchased for Rs. 20 ; but it is doubtful if bullocks bought at that rate would be of a good enough standard for proper rice and wheat cultivation.

In an account of imports into Seoni and Mandla, drawn up in 1831, one of the items is 4,000 head of bullocks, the price of which was Rs. 24,000 or an average of Rs. 6 each. Times have changed since then, but even now the undersized bullocks, with which the Gonds carry on their superficial cultivation in the wilder tracts, can be obtained for Rs. 25 to Rs. 30 per pair. The ordinary price for serviceable animals is Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 a pair. The less substantial cultivators, who have not sufficient plough cattle, either plough with hired animals' (*buhi se*), as in Raigarh Bichchea, or work on the *ponda* system, as in East Dindori, by which in part return for six days farm labour they are allowed to use their master's cattle for their own work on the seventh.

Food.

145. In the ploughing season the plough cattle are fed on wheat, rice, and kodon straw. In the spring crop country, if the owner can afford it, they are given daily a seer of pulse in addition to their ordinary food. When under yoke the cattle are given liberal quantities of salt, two to four chattacks three or four times a month. Also at the three festivals of Hareli in July, Pola in September, and Diwali in October, they receive an extra dole of salt. Except at ploughing time the cattle are turned out to pick up what they can find in the way of grazing, but there is no lack of fodder throughout the district, and, if only the breeding was properly looked after, they would do well.

Buffaloes and other cattle.

146. Buffaloes are rarely used for cultivation, but the cows are kept for the manufacture of ghi and for breeding, the calves being sold into Chhattisgarh. Goats and sheep are very scarce; ponies are used by the better-off people, as roads are bad, and in most places there is no other means of transit. Ponies and bullocks are for the same reason used largely as pack animals.

CHAPTER V.

LOANS, PRICES, WAGES, ETC.

LOANS.

Land Improvement and Agricultural Loans.

147. For the first few years after the Loans Acts were passed, Mandla cultivators did not hurry to avail themselves of the advantages offered. From 1884 to 1891 the total sum given out was less than Rs 3,000. No applications at all were made for loans under the Land Improvements Act; for the mass of the cultivators have not only a deep-rooted objection to embanking their fields and incurring the risk of water-logging, but they also show a lamentable shyness towards any new enterprise. In fact it was not until the year 1898 that any Improvement Loans were applied for, and by 1900 the sum outstanding under this head was only Rs. 1,900. During the famine year of 1897 Rs. 22,400 were advanced to cultivators for seed and bullocks, and a further sum of Rs. 13,440 as a "Famine loan" was lent at no interest for the same purpose. Eventually a quarter of this had to be remitted, but in the two following years, 1898 and 1899, the sums of Rs. 64,000 and Rs. 54,000 respectively were advanced at the ordinary rates as Agricultural Loans. Government loans were very popular at this period, as the cultivators had practically no security to offer except the actual fields of their holdings, and ordinary Banias were naturally reluctant to advance money to men, who might easily decamp with the cash, leaving only the four bare walls of a hovel behind them. In 1901 the amount outstanding under this head was Rs. 68,000; in 1907 Rs. 12,431 of this had been remitted, and the advances still outstanding amounted to only Rs. 987. Two years later, after the scarcity of 1908, more than Rs. 91,300 were taken as Agricultural Loans, and next year Rs. 11,300.

At present (1912) the total debt outstanding is a little more than Rs. 34,000, some of which has been temporarily suspended owing to the partial failure of the 1911-12 rabi crop.

Land Improvement Loans were unpopular for a long while, but in 1905 a succession of good harvests induced some applications, and Rs. 2,610 were advanced. In the two following years other small sums were taken, the amount outstanding at the beginning of 1908 being Rs. 8,700. But that year there fell a famine, and cultivators became alarmed. A rush for Land Improvement Loans was made and altogether more than a lakh of rupees was advanced. This has been paid off in part, other loans have been taken, and this year (1912) the total debt outstanding is rather less than Rs. 55,000. The total amount under both Acts that still remains to be paid stands now at Rs. 88,819. The following statement shows the amount of advances made under both the Acts in the last ten years :—

Year.	Agricultural Loans.	Land Improvement.
	Rs.	Rs.
1902	771	...
1903	2400	...
1904	3005	...
1905	310	2610
1906	411	3882
1907	7490	2500
1908	91,317	1,10,287
1909	11,342	4772
1910	1073	2214
1911	1408	1814
Outstanding debt.	Rs. 34,130	Rs. 54,689

Sanads for Improvement.

148. The natural indolence and backwardness of the aboriginal is reflected in the scanty number of *sanads* or certificates granted to enterprising cultivators for improvement in their holdings. But in the year 1909-10 fifteen

persons broke away from their prejudices and made some excellent embankments, for which each received a sanad. In the following year thirteen cases were discussed and sanads granted to six.

149. Owing to its inaccessibility the outlying parts of Mandla have never offered many attractions to the Bania or speculator. In the beginning of last century the amount of money loans was very small, but money-lenders seemed to have made the most of the opportunities given them. The ordinary money loan was generally taken by a weaver or artisan, who required capital to purchase his stock-in-trade or raw materials. The rate of interest was 2 per cent. per month, but the money-lender used to subtract 2 per cent. from the principal as it changed hands; for the first month therefore the debtor paid interest at the rate of 48 per cent. Even when pledges were given, the rate seldom sank below 24 per cent. The poorer the man was, the more he had to pay, and interest at the rate of 36 or 48 per cent, says Major Wardlow, was frequently extorted from the unhappy debtor.

Private loans.

But Mandla is primarily an agricultural district, and the majority of debts incurred are loans of seed for sowing. The capital accumulated in the district, especially among smaller tenants, has always remained at a very low figure. Having no means of storing their grain, most men preferred to sell it than to keep it in their houses exposed to vermin and mildew. Hence the custom arose of borrowing seed-grain (*bijhai*) and food-grain (*khawai*) from malguzars, well-to-do tenants, or sahukars. At harvest time the amount of grain borrowed is returned in kind together with a quarter or in some cases half as much again. The general rule is that if a khandi of rabi grain is advanced, one and a quarter khandis will be returned, and in the case of a kharif loan, one and a half khandis will be returned. The rate of interest is equivalent to 25 or 50 per cent. for

less than six months, but the lender takes a certain amount of risk ; he is dependent for his return on the state of the crops, and may have to wait till the following season, if the harvest has been bad. Another cause operated to keep the rates of interest at this high figure ; the grain-holder might lend grain, when the market price stood, say, at 16 seers per rupee, and would be paid back when the harvest of that particular grain had just been reaped and the price would have fallen to 20 seers. If he took interest on the ordinary siwai (or 25 per cent. for six-months) system, he would barely be getting back his capital, without any margin for bad debts or interest for the use of his money. The traders however have protected themselves against this risk ; nowadays when they make a grain-loan they compute its value in cash, and afterwards, when the loan is due for repayment, they take back as much grain as would represent the value of the cash loan at present market rates, together with another 25 per cent. interest.

Money-lenders.

150. The principal money-lender of the District is Jagannath Parshad Chowdhry Kalar, whose income (including that of his landed estate) has been estimated at half a lakh. It is said that he is now gradually withdrawing from his money-lending business and living on the income of his villages. Another large money-lender is the firm of Gokul Dass, Marwari Banias of Jubbulpore. Their sphere of action is limited to Mandla town and the north-western tracts of the district. Among others engaged in this trade are Sheoram Gopaldass, Seth Bhaddelal, Seth Dadulal and Ramlal Jamadar, but to try to estimate their incomes is a mere waste of time.

Castes of proprietors.

151. The Maratha rule of Mandla was of too short a duration to have much effect on the old Gond principles of land tenure. Its distance from either Saugor or Nagpur and the general infertility of its soil prevented the district from being parcelled out into large estates and granted to the relatives or favour-

ites of the Maratha Rajahs. Except in the fertile tracts of the Haweli and Pathar, where the village lessees desired a permanent tenure, the greater part of the district was leased on easy terms to malguzars, who in their turn sub-leased the villages to thekedars ; hence, as Mr. Bell says in his Settlement Report : "In the greater part of the Mandla "Tahsil the patels were as fluctuating as their villages. "Except therefore in the open country, when the indiscrimi-"nate and ill-judged hunt for proprietors commenced at the "Regular Settlement, the difficulty was not so much to decide "for or against claims to proprietary right as to find persons, "who would consent not to throw up their properties in a "panic at the first mention of a fixed assessment ; and many "persons, who actually did accept a proprietary assessment, "in the end surrendered their rights. This fact is reflected "in the number of ryotwari villages ; the great majority "of these, especially in the Dindori Tahsil, are old sur-"rendered malguzari properties, which, though declared "Government waste, were continuously cultivated and even-"tually 'excised' for cultivation, that is to say, formally "divorced from Forest management. The only peculiar "tenure is that of the taluqdars of Ramgarh and Shahpura. "For some two centuries prior to the Mutiny this family "held the Dindori Tahsil on a sort of Zamindari tenure, "with a *takoli* of about a seventh of the income : and by "them the villages were leased out to headmen."

Since the giving of proprietary rights many villages have changed hands. Bad harvests followed by borrowing, thrift-lessness, and in some cases chicanery have wrested them from the hands of their malguzars, particularly when the latter was an illiterate and all too simple Gond. At present, of the 1555 villages held in proprietary rights, 436 are owned or shared by Brahmans, 243 by Kalars, 148 by Lodhis, 144 by Gonds, 137 by Banias, 45 by Mussalmans, 59 by Kurmis, 40 by Rathor Telis, 33 by Raj-Gonds, and 141 by others.

It is a regrettable fact that the majority of the villages of this district, in fact, about 70 per cent. are in the hands of non-resident landlords. To quote Mr. Bell once more: "There can be but little sympathy between a Gond tenantry "and non-residents of an alien caste; villages, which in "some cases their owners have practically never seen, are "left to their own devices, to struggle on as best they may; "rents are collected before they are due to save a double "journey; tenants are compelled to travel long distances "to the malguzar's head-quarters to perform *bhet begar*, "such as carriage of wood and grass, thatching, and other "works. The apathetic simplicity and ignorance of the "Gonds renders them no match for determined or educated "aggression, and the larger estates are left mostly to the "tender mercies of dubious and undesirable agents, and will "be found full of active oppression and chicanery, by no "means always within the four corners of the law. Nor as "a rule are matters any better, when fairly large landowners "commence taking a direct part in the management of their "villages. But there is fortunately another side to this "rather depressing outlook. . . . The cultivating castes, "Kurmis, Lodhis, Kalars, Rathors and the like, who are "the main part of the residential malguzars, are usually "on good terms with their tenantry; and their keenness "on extending their home-farm, which might, with "an inferior tenantry, lead them into oppression, is usually "held in check by the fact that in their villages of residence 'the tenantry is of their own or some other good cultivating "caste, and not lightly to be imposed upon. The few "villages, in which the Gonds have succeeded in retaining "their proprietary rights, are however the most contented; "and it is in these alone that some traces of the old patri-"archal system still survive. The malguzar occupies the "position of *primus inter pares*, finances the village with "grain, settles small disputes, and with very few exceptions "has neither the power nor the inclination to take any

"advantage of his tenantry." The Brahman proprietors are mainly the descendants of men, who acquired a position at the old Garha-Mandla court; the "Bania" villages are principally held by the heirs of the late Rajah Seth Gokul Dass, the Kalar villages by Jagannath Parshad Chowdhry and the Lodhi villages by the descendants of the Ramgarh taluqdars. The Mussalman proprietors have for the most part acquired their villages by a back-stairs method, coming into the district in the guise of contractors, liquor sellers or traders. Mr. Bell describes them as "usually non-resident "and negligent landlords, in good circumstances, some-"times not visiting their villages for years together; in one "case it was not even possible to discover whether a titular "owner was alive or dead, and there is a small Muhamma-"dan estate in the Dindori Tahsil, whose owner's very "name is unknown to the tenants, and a matter of grave "doubt to the Tahsildar."

Condition of Landlords.

152. "Amongst the resident malguzars the standard of "comfort is usually very low com-"pared with that of other districts. "The aboriginal malguzars live, of course, in pretty much the "same style as their tenants in grass-thatched, or even wattle "houses: but even the more advanced and substantial castes, "except in the most open parts, live in dwellings, which "cultivators of other districts would consider barely fit for "their cattle. The malguzars of the open country round "Mandla however have a much higher standard of com-"fort; most of them do no field labour or supervision, and "build themselves pretentious houses of burnt brick, "which would pass muster in any district, and spend a good "deal of their time in enjoying the amenities of head-"quarters life, such as it is."

Since the Summary Settlement of 1888 the gross income of malguzars has increased by 100 per cent; the value of the siwai has been doubled, and of the home-farms increased by 34 per cent.

153. It has been said that one of the great tests of prosperity among cultivators is whether they sow their own seed or borrow it from malguzars. In the year 1860 Captain Ward states that quite 50 per cent. of the tenants used to sow their own seed, and the other 50 per cent., although compelled to borrow, were by no means in indigent circumstances. Indebtedness must have been very small, to judge from the few suits brought for recovery. In 1888 an enquiry was made into the condition of the poorest class of cultivators. All began by saying that they were heavily in debt, but the sums involved were generally a few rupees. The statement of one Boda Gond is here appended:

Indebtedness of the Agricultural Classes.

"I am in debt to the extent of 12 khandis* of kodon, and "Rs. 10 in cash. I pay rent at Rs. 6 per annum; I have "twelve mouths to feed, and possess one cot, which is seldom "used. Generally we all sleep on the ground. I live in a "grass-thatched hut, possess 4 bullocks, 6 cows, and 3 calves, "and reap from my fields about 10 kurus (50 seers) of wheat, 1 khandi of gram, 15 khandis of kodon and 5 of kutki." He goes on to say that his indebtedness arose from a succession of light crops, marriages and other expenses, but he always saved enough grain for next year's sowing. From a number of such statements it was clear that the ordinary cultivator was not really indigent, but he had no resources at all to fall back upon in bad years. In all some 97 cultivators were examined and of these as many as 62 had no debts, while the other 25 owed less than Rs. 50. The seven years of scarcity and famine at the close of the nineteenth century made a certain amount of debt inevitable; but Government was the chief creditor, and considerable sums were given in charity. Indebtedness therefore is still small. Out of 28,964 malguzari tenants in 1904 less than 25 per cent. were found to owe anything at all, the total amount of their

* One khandi is the equivalent of 20 kurus or 100 seers (200 lbs. roughly).

debts being 19,068 khandis of grain and Rs. 2,61,139 in cash, or an average of 2·7 khandis and Rs. 37 per man. Actually the great majority of these owed only grain-debts, having borrowed two or three khandis of seed more from custom than necessity. The cash debt was found to be divided amongst 1,405 tenants, of whom only 449 owed more than Rs. 100. The Mokas and Bijegaon villages were the most indebted, where some 132 tenants were involved in debts of an almost fabulous and irrecoverable amount, the cash value being Rs. 64,000. Of this sum about five-sixths have been written off by the creditor, the Rajah Gokul Dass estate, though the balance will still take many years to liquidate. Elsewhere in the district debt is insignificant, and not more than one per cent. of the rental demand is normally in arrears.

PRICES.

The general trend of prices.

154. No record has been kept of the price of staples during the early years of last century. The long protracted Maratha war created a great demand, which made food stuffs very expensive, and a scarcity, that coincided with the restoration of peace, served to keep them at the same high level even after the armies were disbanded and fallow lands again brought under cultivation. It is a significant fact that in 1819 the price of wheat in Bhandara was 10 seers to the rupee, while six years later it was 54. From many villages in Mandla, where the hill-millets are grown for home-consumption only, there was practically no export trade, nor in those days were there any means of transport; prices did not therefore experience the same rapid changes, which in other districts confounded the cultivators and filled Settlement Officers with dismay. The staple food-grains of Mandla are rice in the Haweli, wheat and gram in the Mandla Pathar and Dindori Tahsil, and hill-millets in the barren soils cultivated chiefly by aboriginals. Captain Ward, the Settlement

Officer of 1868, drew up a table which purports to show the prices fetched by various agricultural products in the twenty years preceding his Settlement. In 1849 rice was sold at 35, wheat and gram at 75 and 112, kodon and kutki at 110 and 96 seers to the rupee respectively. But a few years later the American Civil War broke out, and the grain-markets of the New World had to draw their supplies from the East. All prices rose with a bound; in 1865 rice was up to 16 seers, wheat to 18 seers per rupee. A few seasons saw them back again at ordinary prices, but food-grains never reached what to us appears the absurdly low figures of 70 years ago. An increased demand, improvement of communications, both by road and rail, and the depreciation in the value of silver have operated to raise the prices of all grains that have a general, and particularly a European, consumption. The accuracy of the figures given below cannot be guaranteed; the Banias, many of whom are illiterate, as a rule keep no accounts. and such accounts as can be found are not trustworthy. The veracity of the village octogenarian, who has occasionally been consulted, is doubtful, and the official returns are only an approximation.

Wheat.

155. The only record of the price of wheat in early times that could be found, is embodied in a letter written in 1831; the entry says that the rabi grains are sold at approximately Rs. 2-8 a khandi, that is to say, at 40 seers to the rupee. Captain Ward gives the value of wheat as 75 seers to the rupee in 1848, or 114 lbs. to the shilling. The average price for the years 1861-1863 was 33·28, but for the next quinquennium, which coincided with the Civil War in America, it rose to 19·95. The cessation of the war brought with it a corresponding loosening of prices, but the average price of wheat in the headquarters town did not fall below 20·6. Thenceforward the average figure was 18½ until the two "wet" years of 1894-5 sent it up to

16·84. The "wet" years were followed by the great famine of '96-97, when wheat rose to 11½ seers. Two good seasons sent it down to 16½, only to rise again to 10 in the famine of 1900. The last decade 1901-11 has been one of constant change and uncertainty. In 1903-04 wheat was selling as low as 20 seers per rupee, but in October 1908 it could hardly be bought at 6 seers per rupee. Frequently a rupee would buy no more than 7 or 8 seers, though in a month or two it might be good for 22 or 23. The average price for the last decade is 14 32, a figure startling enough when compared with the 7 seers of 1849, or the 30 seers of 1868. To prophesy the future of food-stuffs is reckless work, but now that a railway runs through part of the district and another line may shortly be constructed to connect the wheat-producing tracts with the south, there is little likelihood of wheat ever falling below the present figure of 14 or 15 seers.

Rice.

156. The ordinary ratio between the price of wheat and rice, says Mr. Bell, is about 9 to 10, but this proportion is not borne out by the figures as given by Captain Ward. In 1831 it is probable that rice fetched Rs. 1-8 per khandi, that is to say, Re. 1 per 66 seers. In 1849 it was sold at 35, in 1859 at 37, and in 1868 at 12 seers per rupee. If we exclude the period of abnormal demand caused by the American War, the average selling price of cleaned rice was about 38 seers. For the quinquennia ending with the years 1873, '78, '83, and '88 the prices averaged 18, 16½, 18, and 17 seers respectively. The next five years saw it at 14 seers, the next two at 13½; then came the famine with its total failure of the rice crop, when practically the only rice obtainable was that which was imported from other countries. In those days of universal scarcity a rupee would scarcely buy seven seers. This prohibitive price luckily was short-lived, the average for the next four years 1899-1903 being 14·18. The two minor famines of 1900 and 1907-8 have left their mark on the sale-rates; in

1901 the price was about 11 seers, in 1904 it was 14·50, in 1908 it was 7·69, and last year 1911 it stood at 12·26, at which it appears to be more or less stationary.

157. If Captain Ward's figures are correct, gram was sold in 1849 at 112½ seers to the rupee, or 14 lbs. for a penny. In 1861 the price was 59 seers, and a fair average seems to be have been about 85 for the pre-settlement period. In 1867 however it was sold at 15 seers, next year at 35. From then till the Summary Settlement of 1888 the average was about 32 seers per rupee, since when it has slowly risen, until it now stands at about 16 seers. Packmen regard 5 kurus or 25 seers (new and before the grain has become dry and light) as the present normal price, and official returns give a price for 1904-5 of 25½ and 29½. Thus in the last sixty years the price has risen from 85 to 16, that is by more than 400 per cent. The millets, kodon and kutki, have risen in sympathy with the other food-grains, although there is no large export of either: they are grown chiefly for home-consumption, being the ordinary food of the aboriginals. The average price of kodon before 1868, according to Captain Ward's figures, was 105 seers, and local enquiry shows that this was more or less correct. Later the price rose to 48, 32, and 27 seers, and nowadays it remains at anything between 15 or 16 seers. Kutki practically never comes to headquarters: it is eaten where it is grown, where it is of approximately the same price as kodon. Til which is a valuable oil-seed, has risen by at least 150 per cent. since the days previous to the Regular Settlement. The prices vary almost from day to day, and a rupee will sometimes buy 14, sometimes only 8 seers. It is an important crop in this district, as on it the Gond relies to pay his rent. Jagni (Ramtil) has risen in sympathy with til.

Other grains.

158. The prices given above are those which are current in Mandla, the headquarters town. Since rivers and indifferent roads

Variations in the *Dehat*.

practically cut off all communications during the rains and render them precarious in the best of seasons, prices range very much lower in the outlying tracts. Before the year 1885 separate figures were not available for Dindori, but at that time the price of wheat was 49 per cent. higher in Mandla than in the headquarters of the other Tahsil. For the last twenty years with the exception of the period of famine 1899-1903, wheat and rice have averaged at least 2 seers cheaper in Dindori, and cheaper still in the outlying villages. Dindori, however, has experienced a much greater proportionate improvement in communications than Mandla, with the result that prices have risen more rapidly there than in the home Tahsil. A whole network of roads linking up the eastern and southern tracts of the district is now under contemplation, and when this is an accomplished fact the difference between headquarter and *dehat* prices will be very much reduced.

WAGES.

Wages. Farm-servants.

159. The scale of wages in this district varies very largely according to the locality, the differences being caused not so much by the relative cost of living as by a kind of caste-prejudice, which deters the Gond agricultural labourer from taking service with a Hindu cultivator. The only two servants, who are kept all the year round, are the *harwaha* or ploughman and the *charwaha* or grazier; but among the poorer classes the tenant drives his own plough, and has only one servant, the grazier. Sixty years ago the *harwaha* received for his annual labour about 13½ khandis of grain (9 of kharif, and 4½ of rabi), Rs. 3 in cash, the sweepings of the *kallian* or threshing floor, and, after winnowing, three fingers' depth of the remnant of *bhūsa* and grain, which was left exclusively as the ploughman's *haqq* or perquisite. In addition to this he received one pair of shoes annually from the malguzar. Nowadays wages vary considerably according to the locality, and in more

civilised parts are paid in cash more than in kind. In the open tracts towards Nainpur and Pindrai, where the cultivators are largely Hindus, labourers can obtain as much as Rs. 5 or Rs. 6 a month. Similarly in the Naraingani, Chabi and Mohgaon tracts a man can earn as much as Rs. 4 a month or anything from Rs. 24 to Rs. 36 per annum. In Bichchea field labour is cheaper, being obtainable at Rs. 3 or Rs. 4 a month, and in certain parts between Nainpur and Bamhni a *harwaha* costs as little as Rs. 2 a month or Rs. 22 a year. During the rice-transplanting season a labourer receives from four to six *pailis* (roughly four to six pounds) a day, which is the equivalent of one and a half or two annas. In the less civilised parts the payment of labourers is made half in kind and half in cash. The ordinary wage is Rs. 2 a month, half of which is given in the form of a daily wage of two *pailis* of grain. The grain is one of the lighter millets, generally kodon or kutki. The Gonds employ their relatives as farm-servants, feeding them and sowing an acre or two of land on their behalf. A common method of getting labour is that known as the "lamsina." If an able-bodied lad wishes to marry the daughter of some cultivator, but has not the necessary capital to pay her parents for the alliance, he can engage to serve them as a farm labourer for one, two or three years, after which the daughter is given to him in marriage. The custom is not satisfactory; for as often as not the intended bride has formed a previous connection with somebody else, and refuses to be wedded to the man who has earned her. The labourer's work does not finish with the ploughing; he has also to keep watch and ward over the crops at night in certain seasons. Rice requires to be watched for only one month, that is, when it is in the ear, but wheat requires watching both for the first month after sowing and the month before it ripens. At harvesting the wages of agricultural labour are five seers of *dhan* (rice) or kodon, and two and a half seers of wheat a day, according to the

seasons. In some parts the farm-servant is allowed to take away one-fifth of the entire produce, and, in others, he can have one headload of crop out of every twenty, that he has cut. It is not often that outside help is required for winnowing, as the cultivator turns his whole family on to the work. If however a labourer is engaged, he receives four seers of *dhan* (rice), or two seers of spring crop grain for his day's work. In converting this quantity into a cash equivalent, it must be remembered that though a seer of rice is worth six pice in Mandla, it can be bought for half that sum in the *dehat*.

The Grazier.

160. The grazier or *charwaha* is the one labourer who is employed by practically every household in a village; for few are so poor that they cannot keep a cow for milking or a calf or two for selling. Formerly the grazier used to receive two kurus of kharif or one of rabi grain a month for each head of plough-cattle entrusted to his care. The more prosperous cultivators would supply him with a blanket and a pair or two of shoes in the course of the year. Now however a tendency has grown up to pay the grazier in cash, the wages varying with the locality. In Mandla town the grazier receives four annas a cow and eight annas a she-buffalo per month, but in the district rates are cheaper,—six pies for a cow and one anna for a buffalo.

Lohar.

161. The Lohar is an artisan who makes his home generally in the larger villages only. It is his duty to repair the agricultural implements of the cultivators, for which he is paid at a fixed rate in kind. In places where the Agaria caste is to be found, the Agarias perform this duty, receiving in payment a small percentage of the harvest at harvest time. Elsewhere the ordinary Lohar is a regularly appointed village servant. In Narainganj Circle he is given four kurus (about forty pounds) of the spring crop, in Bichchea five kurus of the autumn and two kurus of the spring crop per plough. In the

parts round Amgaon and Ramnagar the scale of payment is four or five kurus, in Chabi four kurus of autumn crop per plough. Besides his regular income he is able to turn over a little profit by the sale of iron goods, such as axes, for which the demand among the Gonds and Baigas is very considerable. Axes are of two shapes, known as *tangia* and *pharsa*. The *tangia* is a heavy, rectangular shaped weapon with a two or three inch cutting surface, and in the hands of a Gond or Baiga is admirable for felling trees, no matter what their diameter may be; the *pharsa* has a long curved edge like an ancient battle axe, and can only be employed in more delicate work, such as the skinning of animals or the partition of the flesh.

Barhai.

162. Carpentry has not yet reached a high pitch of excellence in this district, and as a rule the cultivators are as competent to do the little repairs they need as the professional Barhai himself. In fact they generally make the wooden part of their ploughs with their own hands, going only to the Lohar for the iron. Consequently in Bichchea, Narainganj, and Chabi circles the Barhai can find no market. In Ramnagar and a few other places where carpenters are occasionally employed, a daily wage is from five to six annas. If he is engaged for the whole year, the Barhai is paid at the rate of Re. 1 or Rs. 2 per plough.

Barber.

163. The Barber is rarely met with in a Gondi village. The ordinary Gond cultivator is satisfied with the 'prentice hand of his neighbour when he desires to have his hair cut, and Hindu barbers are compelled to keep to the larger villages and towns. The price for getting one's hair cut by a professional barber is one or two pice a time, but if the barber is engaged annually, the price is eight annas a head. In Mandla town the rates are two pice or one anna for men, and half those amounts for boys. At marriages a barber receives a present from the contracting parties, and at the

" Thread " ceremony which takes place when a boy of the twice-born castes has attained the age of eight years, the barber is given the sum of Rs. 1/4 for shaving the boy's head.

Water-bearer, dhobi and potter.

164. In this district, whenever they are to be found, Dhimars and Ahirs are employed as water-bearers. In the *dehat* the wages of a water-bearer vary from Rs. 3 to Rs. 5 per annum for each household, to which he supplies water. As a rule however the women of the house draw water for their own folk, and the water-bearer makes but a scanty income. In Mandla they receive the princely stipend of Re. 1 a year from each household, for which sum they supply it daily with four *kashendis*, or jars, of water. The Dhobi is also rarely met with except in the largest villages, like Maharajpur, Bamhni, Nainpur, Pindrai, Dindori, or Shahpura. His ordinary charge for washing is one pice per garment, and another pice if the garment has to be ironed. If a male child is born to a house, his charges rise to Re. 1 for the occasion, but if a female child is born, he is content with eight annas. At a marriage ceremony, or the " Thread " ceremony of a " twice-born," it is the Dhobi's duty to spread the ground with garments known as *pairghadi*. For this he receives an extra fee of Rs. 1/4. The potter is like the Dhobi in the fact that he can find no market except in the larger villages. He has to bring his wares to the bazaar before he can sell them, and then he receives one anna for a *gharra* or water pot and from two pice to six pice for the cooking pots of every day use. The only red letter day in his existence is the occasion of a marriage, when he has to bring twenty-five gharras and heap them around the chabutra or porch, while the *Hom* ceremony is being performed. In return for his gharras he is paid the sum of Rs. 1/4 or rather less than an anna each.

Priests.

165. The Hindu Purohit, or Brahman priest, is only found in villages, where a number of Hindus are dwelling. His duties are just the



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

A GOND PANDA OR PRIEST (TYPICAL GOND FACES).

same here as in any other district, but for a marriage ceremony he is paid Rs. 10. In Gond villages the work of the Purohit is done, if possible, by a Baiga, otherwise by a Pardhān. The ghostly ministrations of a Baiga are locally considered to be of the very highest efficacy, because the Baiga race inhabited the jungles of this country long before the Gonds ever ventured into it,and he is naturally considered to have a very complete knowledge of the jungle deities. Mr. Russell records an instance of an enlightened Brahman, who was transferred to a jungle station, immediately summoning the local Baiga and enquiring what forest gods he should worship and what other steps he should take to keep well and escape calamity. Not only does the Baiga protect his congregation from the crafts and assaults of the devil, but he also keeps disease at bay. He appoints the day for a marriage ceremony, and performs the various exorcising rites required to lay the soul of a dead man at rest. These offices are infrequently rewarded with cash, but all ceremonies require a number of sacrifices and oblations, which the Baiga regards as his perquisites. A marriage will bring him in about three rupees' worth of grain or other commodities. One Baiga will have a circle of villages, which he looks upon as his beat; these he visits periodically, receiving doles of kodon or kutki or gram from the villagers. The Pardhan is really a Gond by caste, and his presence is essential at a marriage, to sing the Gondi epics. The Pardhans date their origin from the time when Lingo, the ancient hero of the race, first instructed the Gonds in the rudiments of theology; he persuaded them to make a great sacrifice to the local deities, and, to prevent the good food of the sacrifice going to waste, made a man a "Pardhan," so that he might receive the sacrifice on behalf of the gods. The Gond epic relates how that*:—"In a brass plate they placed cooked rice, liver, flesh, and they lighted four lamps, and

* Hislop's Translation.

took and placed them before the gods. And some made an offering of silver pieces as a present to the god. Thus a heap of silver up to the knee of a man was gathered before the god. Then Lingo spoke: Hear, O brethren; the offerings are good in the courts of the god; but there is no one to receive these offerings. Hear, O brethren; from the midst of all these Gonds let some one become a Pardhan, and we will give this offering unto him. Then Lingo looked well among the company and saw an old, hoary haired man first of all; and having looked on him took his hand and said: Become a Pardhan, and we will give you much wealth and clothes; we will give you a horse, and whatever you ask us, we will not refuse. Well, brother, said the old man, I am fit for nothing but to sit and eat." This utterance was regarded as an acceptance of the proposal, and the old man was duly installed in his new office. The Pardhan set to work at once, his first action being to arrange marriages amongst the Gonds. He went to a distant village and said: "I am your Pardhan, I was made Pardhan by Lingo, your Lord. Lingo has sent me to you, because he knows that you possess daughters; to ask them in marriage he has sent me to you. If I see a fit person, I will join her in marriage." The arrangements are made and the parents of the bride and bridegroom "after washing the feet of the Pardhan made him to sit in their house—and the Pardhan said: To make the matter sure and binding, let us go to the liquor shop. Whatever a Lingo told the Pardhan about marriage ceremonies, so the Pardhans now tell the Gonds to do." The epic poems, from which the above is an extract, are recited by the Pardhans at the marriage and other ceremonies of the Gonds. These men also conduct the ceremonies at the worship of Bara Deo, offering liquor, cocoanuts, betel-leaves, flowers, lemons and rice. They live largely on charity, though in ancient days their chief source of income was systematic cattle-lifting and theft.



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

AGARIA'S (IRONWORKER'S) FURNACE.

MANUFACTURES.

166. The manufactures of this district are of little importance or interest. The only peculiar industry is that of iron smelting, which is carried on in the most primitive of methods. The ore is either quarried or found lying about on the surface of the ground in the form of boulders of a reddish hue, this tinge having been communicated to it by the blood of the Goddess Sita, who was shot by Laxman in mistake for a stag. The smelting caste are known as Agarias, and their apparatus is a cone of clay and straw, five feet in height and two feet in diameter at the base; it is constructed so as to leave a hollow cylinder eight inches in diameter running up the inside. A stone is put underneath one side of the cone to give it a tilt, but no one can explain why a tilt is considered necessary. Two orifices are made at the foot of the cone, one to admit the nozzle of the bellows, and another to enable the smelter to extract the slag. Charcoal and ore are carried along a feeder and dropped into the cone from above; the furnace is lighted from the base, and kept going by the woman, who works the bellows. The latter are generally two in number, shaped like boxes with a loose top of leather. The woman, who must be strong and active, stands with a foot on each, and as she raises one foot, a springy bamboo draws up the leather, filling the bellows with air. The woman then transfers her weight to this bellows, driving out the air through a nozzle into the furnace, and incidentally raising the other foot, which allows the other bellows to fill with air. The operator has to use a stick to balance herself and is generally reduced to a state of utter exhaustion in about four hours. Each furnace consumes 25 seers of charcoal daily, and turns out 1½ seers of cast iron. This is further purified and made into wrought iron, the final outturn being about one seer. In its rough state the iron is valued at five annas per seer, but when fashioned into agricultural and other implements

Ironwork.

a seer's weight will fetch about twelve annas. Generally each agricultural household gives a small percentage of its harvest to the Agarias as payment for any little repairs that their implements may need throughout the year. At the end of the rains new furnaces are built, and on a propitious day pigs, goats and sweetmeats being offered to their guardian deity, the Agarias open the furnaces for the next year's work.

Besides the manufacture of agricultural instruments the Agarias make arrowheads for the Baigas for use against wild animals. The arrow head is barbed, so that it cannot fall out of the wound, before the poison, with which it is covered, has had time to work its way into the victim's system.

Bell-metal.

167. Bell-metal is used for vessels and ornaments of every shape and variety. The metal is an alloy of copper, tin and lead, the proportions being 80 of copper, 20 of tin and 1 of lead. This alloy is put in an earthen vessel. Then a mould is made of earth, horse dung and rice husks, and fashioned to the requisite shape on a lathe. A wax made of oil and resin (*ral*) is then rolled carefully on to the mould, and covered with a coating of clay. The mould thus prepared is attached to the vessel, which contains the metal, care being taken to insure free communication between the metal and the wax inside its clay covering. The whole apparatus is then placed in a furnace, the vessel containing the metal being underneath. As soon as the wax has melted and the metal has become molten, the apparatus is turned upside down, and the metal running into the space left by the melted wax is moulded into the desired shape. The workman can always tell when the metal has become fully molten, because the flames of the assume furnace a peculiar green tinge probably caused by the emission of a gas. As soon as the metal has been cast into the required shape, the outer casing is broken, and

the inner mould picked out, the metal being finally shaped and polished on a lathe. In this district, where brass is rare and costly, all castes of people use vessels of bell-metal, whether trays, plates, *lotas*, or drinking cups, and they are not considered liable to pollution. Unlike the custom that prevails in other districts, bell-metal vessels are freely lent and borrowed, and are not tainted, if used by an outsider. Armlets, bracelets, anklets, rings, hair ornaments and finger bowls are manufactured in considerable quantities; the price depends on the fragility and finish of the work, raw metal fetching eight annas, and finished articles two rupees or more per seer.

Leather.

168. In aboriginal villages which possess no Chamar, the Gonds themselves have to remove the carcases of dead animals, the man, who does this work, keeping the hide as his wages. The Gonds do no tanning themselves, but sell the hides to Chamars. In villages that can boast of a Chamar, the hide of a dead bullock, buffalo or goat becomes the property of the Chamar, in return for his removing the carcase and keeping the malguzar supplied with shoes and leather rope. The Chamar is not particular as to the skin he tans; his work lies generally with buffalo, bullock, cow, sheep or goat skins, but he frequently tans sambhar, chithal, black buck, panther and bear. Buffalo hide is the strongest and thickest; when raw, it will fetch anything from Rs. 1/8 to Rs. 3 per skin and when dressed another rupee or so. Buffalo hide is used for the soles of shoes, the uppers being made from the finer and more pliable sheep or goat hide, which is also used for bellows, drums and book-binding. The hides of cows and bullocks are generally exported. The process of tanning varies in different parts of the district. The skin is as a rule placed in the village water-course for from twelve hours to four days, according to its hardness. It is then smeared with slaked lime and soaked in a vat (*nand*), containing a solution of lime, for several days, until the surface of the skin is softened

and a white fungoid growth appears upon it. The fat and inner skin and hair are scraped off with a fleshing knife, and the hide is again steeped in a solution of water and dry *dhawa* leaves. After two or three days it is taken out and sewed up into the shape of a sack, and suspended over a vat. The skin is then filled with powdered *dhawa* leaves or powdered bark of the *kahuwa* or *saj* tree. Water is poured inside and out, until the tanning has soaked into the hide, after which the skin is beaten and hammered, until it is quite soft and pliable. The whole process of tanning a buffalo or ox skin takes about fifteen days in the hot weather, and a month in the winter. The leather still has to be curried before it can be transformed into shoes, water bags or ropes, and exposed for sale. The water bag (*mot*) is used for drawing water from wells ; but for carrying water other kinds of leather vessels, the *mushak* or bag, the *dol* or bucket, and the *pakhal* or bullock bag, are made. A pair of shoes costs from six to twelve annas to manufacture, and is sold for ten annas or a rupee. Each pair takes a day to make, but the skill lies not in the fit or speed of execution so much as in the number of shoes that can be cut out of a single skin. The larger water bags such as *pakhal* or *mot* cost from Rs. 7 to Rs. 8 each and a *dol* from 10 annas to Re. 1. Bellows are made of goat skin and cost Rs. 3 apiece. On the whole the Chamars find it a hard task to make both ends meet ; unless they are exceptionally skilful, they cannot earn more than four annas a day.

Ghi.

169. The manufacture of *ghi*, or clarified butter, is an industry of some importance in this district. Banias of Mandla and Jubbulpore have advanced capital to the Ahirs, who keep great herds of she-buffaloes and cows in the neighbourhood of Bichchea and Chabi, and sell the *ghi* to their creditors. The price varies according to the season; from the middle of August to the end of December the rate is one and a half to two seers per rupee. Later on fodder becomes scarce,

and owing to the extreme cold the animals give less milk; the rate then rises to one and a quarter or one and an eighth seers per rupee. In Mandla, Bamhni, Pindrai and Nainpur, *ghi* sells from 14 chattaks to 18 chattaks per rupee, the higher rate being due to the opening of the railway line and an increase of the export trade. The method of manufacture in this district differs from the methods employed elsewhere. The usual process is to boil the milk and make it into curds, but here the milk is churned direct without curdling, the result being a highly unpalatable concoction.

170. Although the area under forest in Mandla is so immense, fire-wood is most remarkably scarce. During the rains when the Nerbudda is in flood, a considerable quantity of wood,—whole trees, logs, bamboos, or branches,—is washed down from the nallahs up-country, and people living near the banks gather a good harvest of fire-wood from the river, often collecting enough to last them for the year. In villages which have no malguzari forest, the villagers have to get their fire-wood from Government forest on payment of nistar. In Mandla itself wood is very hard to get except in the open weather. Tradition says that some enterprising shop-keeper once tried to supply the town with fuel, but the venture proved a failure. Nowadays such wood as does find its way into Mandla is brought in head-loads called *moli*, weighing about 12 seers each. The price per head-load is three annas, or one pice a seer. Another method is the following: faggots are cut in the Government Forest at Ramnagar and tied in bundles of three, each bundle, also called *moli*, weighing one seer. Two or three thousand bundles are then fastened together and launched into the Nerbudda; the current brings them down to Mandla, where they are rescued by Dhimars and sold at 64 bundles to the rupee. But this is only a petty industry compared with the huge timber trade of the district. Immense quantities of sleepers for railway lines, logs,

Fire-wood.

and fire-wood are carried by road to Bamhni and to Jubbulpore, from where the timber is despatched by train all over the Peninsular.

171. Pān is grown in four places in the district, Khairi, Bineka, Hirdenagar, and Bamhni. The gardens at Hirdenagar are very large, and their betel-vines have a great reputation in many districts. The leaves are largely exported to Jubbulpore, Keolari, Seoni, Balaghat, and Chhindwara. The Pansaris or Barais, who cultivate the vines, are well-to-do and prosperous. The price of a hundred leaves in the rains is two pice, in the cold weather four pice, and in the hot weather three or four annas. A complete "*pan*" is sold at the rate of three to the pice. Tobacco is grown by almost every villager in his *bari* or garden, but generally for home consumption only. When it is grown for sale, it is planted as a rule in the "*kachchars*" (sand-beds) by the side of rivers and nallahs; the price is from three to four seers per rupee. The demand for grass is very low; it is generally sold in head-loads at two or three annas each in the cold weather or rains, and at four, six or eight annas in the hot weather. Grass can be obtained from Government Forests at 600 pullas to the rupee. Leaves, as such, are not bought or sold, but the Baris bring them from the jungle and make plates of them, for which they are paid at the rate of four annas per hundred. The woollen industry is practically non-existent in Mandla; the head-quarters town contains two or three Koshtas, who weave fine cloth, and in a number of villages two or three Maheras may perhaps be found, who weave coarse cloth. Cultivators generally wear a hand-woven *dhotie* of local make, but mill-woven coats, which are imported from Nagpur or Jubbulpore. At Itka, a village near Nainpur, some twenty or thirty Kacheras manufacture glass bangles; this industry however is being slowly ruined by the transparent Austrian bangles, which are imported in large quantities and may be found in the very

Other Industries.



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

BAZAR, MANDLA

heart of the district. Lac bangles are made in Mandla, Bamhni and Hirdenagar by a caste of Hindus known as Lakheras. The social status of the caste is somewhat low, and no other Hindu will take water from a member of it.

Markets.

172. The largest bazaar in the district is that which is held on Sundays in Mandla, when considerable quantities of grain, cloth, vegetables and other commodities change hands. Timber however is not sold in Mandla. In addition to the Sunday market a daily evening market is held in the Hogganj and a morning *gusri* in the town. Bamhni is another important bazaar, held on Saturday, and deriving its popularity from the fact that grain there sells half a seer cheaper than at Mandla. Niwari market, held on Mondays, is chiefly devoted to the sale of grain. Nainpur bazaar is now growing in importance, but the principal market in those parts is that at Pindrai, which is held three times a week. The ordinary bazaar falls on Saturdays, but on Wednesdays and Thursdays an important cattle market is held. The system of cattle registration is in force at Pindrai; on payment of one anna per head of cattle the buyer is given a pass, which declares him to be a *bonâ fide* purchaser of the animal. The buying of a pass is purely optional, but in the last two years the receipts to the District Fund Committee under these heads have been Rs. 270 in 1910-11, and just over Rs. 100 in 1911-12, the total number of passes issued being all but 6,000 for the two years. The principal traders in the bazaars are Agarwal Banias, with a fair sprinkling of Mohammadans. The timber trade is in the hands of Punjabi Mohammadans, but almost all the malguzars of the district do a little in this line, if their forests are capable of producing marketable timber.

The only important market in Dindori Tahsil is one held at Kakarramath, where grain and cloth are sold. Many small bazaars are held all over the district, but they are too insignificant to demand a special notice.

Fairs—Hirdenagar.

173. The largest fair in the district is held at Hirdenagar, on the bed of the Banjar close to its junction with the Matiari River. The fair begins in Magh (January-February) and lasts for a month, closing at the Holi Festival. The fair is popularly supposed to have been originated by Rajah Hirde Shah when he settled the village that is called after his name, with a number of immigrants from other districts. Although a *chabutra* of Mahadeo has been constructed and the fair is supposed to commemorate the deity's name, religion plays a very small part in the festivities. It is attended by some 5,000 persons, and about 300 shops are set up in the neighbourhood, some bringing their wares from as far as Jubbulpore for the purpose. People satisfy their consciences by bathing at the junction of the two rivers, after which they devote themselves to trade or amusement. Singhara nuts are sold in large quantities and there is some traffic in country iron and Raigarh cattle. Of late years an Agricultural Show has been held, to which the Director of Agriculture grants pecuniary assistance.

Madhpuri and other fairs.

174. Madhpuri is a village on the bank of the Nerbudda about eight miles from Mandla on the Ramnagar road. The Madhpuri fair lasts for a month, but the great day is Aghan Badi Amawas. Two stories are connected with the place, one that it is the last resting place of a *rishi* or holy man, above whose tomb a Mahadeo has now been placed, another that a man, who for his sins had been transformed into a horse, leaped from this place into the Nerbudda, and was carried straight up to heaven. Accordingly the devout attend the fair in large numbers and repeatedly dive into the sacred stream in hope that the same good fate may befall them. The ghat is known as Ghora Ghat, or the Ghat of the Horse, and a stone image of the horse may still be seen. About 2,000 persons annually attend the fair, both Hindus and Gonds; cattle are sold and booths from Mandla



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

SACRED FALLS AT SAHASRADHARA.

and Jubbulpore are set up. At Sahasradhara, a few miles down the river from Mandla, a fair takes place in November, which commemorates the river's miraculous escape from a thousand-armed Rajah, who tried to stop her course. By dividing her current into a thousand streams the maiden Nerbudda was able to elude the thousand hands stretched out to catch her. The fair is only attended by residents of Mandla and has no general importance. At Purwa also, where the Banjar and Nerbudda join, a fair is held and well attended, the secret of its popularity being that if a man wash in this holy confluence of rivers his sins are straightway forgiven him. Hindus attend it from other districts, but the fair is now not so famous or important as once it was. The usual trading booth is to be seen, but little trade is done.

Weights and Measures, Grain.

175. In dealing with grain the ordinary measures are the kuru (five seers or a little more than ten pounds) and the khandi which is twenty kurus or one hundred seers. The table of weights is as follows :—

40 tolas make 1 paili.
2 pailis make 1 seer.
5 seers make 1 kuru.
20 kurus make 1 khandi.

In Niwari and Pindrai however on the Seoni side, the kuru contains twelve pailis or six seers, and is known as *barha*. Another word for paili is *barhaya*, and a quarter of a paili (10 tolas) is called *chaholi*. Prices are always quoted as so many seers to the rupee, but in measuring out a rupee's worth the paili is invariably used. For instance, if rice was selling at eleven seers per rupee, a purchaser would receive 22 measures, each of which would be a paili. In measuring grain, not weights but measures are used and a kuru measure filled with one grain will vary considerably from one of another grain. A kuru of wheat weighs 4 seers 14 chattaks, rice weighs 5 seers 1 chattak, til 3 seers 12 chattaks, jagni 3 seers 11 chattaks, gram 4 seers

13 chattaks, and masur 4 seers 11 chattaks. The maund is practically never used except on the railway and in the weighing of hemp.

Other Measures.

176. The measure of length is the *kos*, which is approximately three miles, and anything varying from a mile to a mile and a half is known as *dhab* or *dhap*. The villagers never use the word *jarīb* or chain except when talking to an official, and have a very rudimentary knowledge of its length. Another measure of distance is the *hāk* or "shout," which means the distance which a human shout will carry, generally about half a mile. The most variable measure is that of area. The villagers talk of *ek har ka zamin* or a plough of land, meaning any area from 6 to 20 acres. The size varies according to the soil; for instance, in best black soil it may be as little as 5 or 6 acres, while in stony barra soil it may mean as much as 20; in any case the "plough" is the ordinary two bullock plough of the country. In measuring gold, silver, and precious articles the weights used are as follows:—

8 gunjas make 1 masha.
12 mashas make 1 tola.

A rupee is popularly supposed to be the exact equivalent of one tola, but allowance has to be made for the wear and tear even of a new coin in weighing gold. A newish rupee is therefore considered to weigh 11·9 mashas.

Pān-garden Measures.

177. The pān-growers or Barais of Hirdenagar have a curious way of measuring land. Their scale is as follows:—

24 haths make 1 suji.
16 sujis make 1 pari.

A *pari* is really a measure of length, but it has also a breadth of between 28 and 29 inches. The length of the *pari* depends of course on the length of the *hath*, and the length of the *hath* is decided in a curious way. This is not an ordinary *hath* of 18 inches, or the "long *hath*" of 27

inches, nor the length from the elbow to the tip of the fingers, plus the breadth of the fist, as it was declared to be by Captain Ward. The pān-grower community choose a man somewhat long in the limb and regard his *hath* or forearm as their standard until his death. The patwari keeps a piece of rope, which is annually checked by this man's arm before any measurements are taken, and the *hath* so measured at present is 30½ inches in length. One *pari* is therefore the equivalent of 30½ × 16 × 24 inches in length, by 28 or 29 inches in breadth, that is, 976 feet by 28 or 29 inches, or ·043 of an acre. The revenue assessment is by *paris*, not by acres.

TRADE.

Exports and Imports.

178. Major Wardlow in speaking of trade in Mandla and Seoni eighty years ago sums up the position in a few words: deploring the absence of capital in these parts, he says, "there is no inducement for rich and opulent men to settle "here in consequence of the general poverty of the inhabi-"tants, the almost total absence of all sorts of trade, and in "short the complete want of everything, by which a man "possessed of money can turn it to advantage." In those days the total annual export of wheat and rice from Seoni and Mandla amounted to 16,000 and 68,000 maunds respectively. The greater part of this, in fact 8,000 maunds of wheat and 60,000 of rice, was sent from Seoni to Nagpur, the rest going north to Jubbulpore. The total exports were valued at one lakh of rupees, of which Rs. 77,000 or 77 per cent. was the value of exported wheat, rice and gram. The imports came from Nagpur and the South (Bhandara and Chhattisgarh), or from Jubbulpore and Mirzapur; their annual value was two lakhs of rupees. Salt (Rs. 25,000), cattle (Rs. 24,000), and cocoanut (Rs. 44,000) accounted for about half of this sum, the rest being spent chiefly in clothes or spices. In Mandla trade was always in a very backward state; and Captain Ward in 1868 remarks

that except for grain (principally wheat) it was almost negligible. Moreover the grain trade was in the hands of a few foreign traders, who came and collected the harvests at stated periods. The Dindori, or Ramgarh, Tahsil cultivators were entirely dependent on the travelling merchants, who profited by the ignorance of the villagers and the absence of competition. In 1868 however the grain supplies of India were short, and a rush of traders to Mandla opened the eyes of the cultivators to the value of their produce. A certain amount of forest produce, *lac*, *ral* (resin), *harra* and various dyes were also bought up by the foreign traders. In those days, as at present, the trade routes were in the direction of Jubbulpore from the parts round Mandla and Shahpura, and towards Rewah from east and south Dindori. The opening of the railway at Jubbulpore, followed by the construction of the Mandla-Jubbulpore road, encouraged a great quantity of through traffic from the plains of Chhattisgarh.

Statistics.

179. Neither Mandla, Dindori nor Shahpura levy the octroi tax; it is therefore practically impossible to estimate the amount of exports and imports that pass through these three places. Owing to the absence of good roads the trade of the east, which includes the important *harra* and oil-seeds, is carried on pack-bullocks, either to the big markets of Jubbulpore district or to the railway in Rewah State; the bullock trains move over tracks made by themselves, along no definite roads, and no one can gauge the amount of produce carried by them. To quote the figures of the railway returns at Pendra Road and Birsinghpur is misleading, as in them is included the produce of Rewah State and other tracts. Similarly in the west of the district the villages north of Narainganj send their produce direct to Jubbulpore by road, and the quantity thus exported is recorded on no registers of trade. Such figures as can be given will only show the exports of three important stations, Mandla, Bamhni and Pindrai, which

receive the produce of the rich, fertile Haweli and Pathar tracts in the south-west of the district. It must be remembered that they represent only a small fraction of the trade of the district and form but a poor criterion of its extent.

Exports—Wheat and other produce.

180. Out of a total cropped area of 729,000 acres the average area under wheat is 104,000 acres or rather more than 14 per cent. The principal variety grown is the *sukarhai*, which has a soft grain of exceeding whiteness, and is exported to the United Kingdom in considerable quantities for bread-making. The *parhari* variety, which is grown in Dindori Tahsil for export to Arabia, is carried by pack-bullocks to Jubbulpore and the railway stations in Rewah. The statistics of wheat exports therefore as given by the three Railway Stations of Mandla, Bamhni and Pindrai, will show only the quantity of *sukarhai* wheat, which is exported from the district. From Mandla station the amount exported in the year 1911-12 was 56,000 maunds, from Bamhni 40,000 maunds, and from Pindrai 68,000 maunds. The total for the year therefore was 164,000 maunds, the approximate value of which was Rs. 4,00,000. The next most important of the grains is *sarson* (otherwise known as *rai* or mustard), of which 50,000 maunds were exported in 1911-12 from Mandla, 962 from Bamhni, and 2,000 from Pindrai, a total of 53,000 maunds worth about two and a half lakhs of rupees. Gram is comparatively unimportant, only 10,000 maunds worth Rs. 15,000 being exported. A similar quantity of harra, valued at Rs. 11,000, found its way to the big dye works of Bombay. Of til and ramtil (or *jagni*) 8,000 maunds were exported, and of linseed nearly 10,000 maunds, the value of all three together being Rs. 77,000. Hemp is grown chiefly in the neighbourhood of Pindrai, from where 7,800 maunds were exported, Mandla and Bamhni receiving and despatching only 3,000 maunds. The value of this hemp at Rs. 4 a maund was Rs. 43,200. The rich pastures of Raigarh Bichchea sent

some 3,400 maunds of *ghi* to Mandla for export, the other two stations receiving about 400 maunds; the total value of the *ghi* exported was approximately one and a half lakhs.

181. In addition to the timber which is regularly cut by malguzars in their own jungles and sold into Jubbulpore and other markets, tree-felling leases have been given out to contractors for cutting timber in two Forest Reserves, the Motinala and the Banjar. The following table shows the amount of timber cut and the prices paid by the contractors for the right to cut in the Motinala Range:—

Timber.

Year.	Number of trees cut.	Cubic feet of timber.	Contractors' payments to Government.
			Rs.
1909-10...	2,878	37,000	7,049
1910-11...	1,575	30,775	6,517
1911-12...	1,945	31,898	6,176

The value of the timber at the Railway Station was Rs. 46,000, Rs. 38,000, and Rs. 40,000 for the three years respectively. In the Banjar Reserve, in the year 1909-10, although 159 trees were cut, none were removed. The following statement shows the amount of timber cut in the two years following, but omits an item of 4,250 cubic feet of timber valued at Rs. 2,915, which was cut departmentally.

Year.	Number of trees cut.	Cubic feet of timber.	Contractors' payments.
			Rs.
1910-11	678	27,798	3,352
1911-12	395	12,628	1,757

The value after cutting charges and transport expenses to the railway station had been paid, was Rs. 17,000 and Rs. 8,000 respectively. The Banjar sal trees are used

largely for railway sleepers, and in the year 1911-12 the weight of sleepers despatched from Bamhni, the nearest station to the Banjar, was 875 maunds.

Imports : Salt.

182. The scanty pittance, which the Mandla cultivator wrings from his holding, suffices to provide him with very little more than the bare necessities of life; and this general poverty of the district as a whole is reflected in the character and quantity of the imports. Gold, silver, spices, and anything that suggests luxury or refinement, find a very poor market, the only considerable imports being essentials like salt, oil, sugar or clothing.

Salt is imported by rail to Pindrai, Bamhni and Mandla, and by road to Narainganj from Jubbulpore. The quantity imported in the year 1911-12 was over 20,000 maunds, the value being Rs. 50,000. The salt generally imported is the white variety known as *Golandaji*, which is purer but less saline than the black kind so popular towards Nagpur. In Mandla, Bamhni, Pindrai and Narainganj the price varies from 14 to 15 seers per rupee; it is bought at this price by Banias, who sell it in their own villages at about a seer or half a seer dearer, the price varying with the distance from the railway line. In the days before the Mutiny, when the tax on salt was purely nominal, the price was very low; the imposition of a duty sent the price up with a bound, but now the duty has been reduced, salt has reached a more reasonable figure. Owing to the large number of cattle in the district, the demand for salt is of no mean size, especially as the plough cattle receive an extra dole on high days and holidays. The supply of salt works out at about 4 lbs. per head of population per annum.

Sugar.

183. In the year 1911-12 the amount of sugar imported through the three railway stations of Pindrai, Bamhni and Mandla was nearly 4000 maunds, and the value was Rs. 47,000. It comes from two places, Mauritius and Mirzapur. The

Mauritius variety, known as Bombay sugar, is the cleaner and whiter, but many people have an idea that this sugar is mixed with bone dust and refuse to touch it. Two confectioners in Mandla, who used to keep Bombay sugar, lost all their custom and have had to close down their shops. This superstition is now dying out, and more and more people are taking to the Mauritius sugar which is sold at $3\frac{3}{4}$ seers to the rupee, that is, three quarters of a seer cheaper than the other variety. Mirzapur sugar, known as "deshi sugar," is dark in colour and not very palatable. The genuine article can only be obtained with difficulty as it is customary for unscrupulous traders to mix a quantity of *gur* with it and sell the mixture as genuine deshi sugar. *Gur* is made out of the juice of an inferior quality of sugarcane or *barai*, which is grown in a few places in Ramnagar and Jamgaon Circles. The price is 5 or 6 seers in Mandla, and 7 seers in the villages where it is manufactured, which are Rambag, Kuwargaon, Kakaiya, Semarkhapao, Keharpur, Bineka, Tikarwara, Piparpani, Jamgaon, Churi, Tilai, and a few others. A certain amount of *gur* is also imported, the quantity in 1911 being 212 maunds; it comes from Cawnpore and is one seer a rupee cheaper than locally made *gur*, though a little less pleasant to the taste.

Other imports.

184. Other articles of general utility imported in 1911-12 were:—

	Maunds.
Cocoanut	1800
Kerosine oil	3700
Turmeric	600
Spices	200
Cloth	2900
Iron	1500

For the few who can afford to indulge in luxuries denied to the many, small quantities of brocaded cloth are imported from Barhanpur, silk from Bilaspur and Nagpur, brass vessels from Mirzapur and large bell-

metal *thalis* (dishes) from Umrer. The aboriginal grows and smokes his own tobacco, but for those whose gorge rises at the acrid taste of the local variety, a milder and less pungent leaf is brought from the plantations of Bengal.

The trade of Garha-Mandla station for the first three years since the opening of the line is shown in the following table:—

EXPORTS.

Year.		Maunds.		Worth Rs.
1909	...	107,335	...	27,949
1910	...	132,866	...	24,421
1911	...	184,869	...	42,837

IMPORTS.

Year.		Maunds.		Worth Rs.
1909	...	59,349	...	16,301
1910	...	59,905	...	13,831
1911	...	83,572	...	15,808

COMMUNICATIONS.

Railways.

185. The district is very badly provided with railway communication. The only railroad is about nine miles of the Jubbulpore-Gondia narrow-gauge line which passes through the extreme western borders of the district joining Nainpur and Pindrai, from the former of which a branch line was constructed in 1909, linking Nainpur with Maharajpur, a suburb of Mandla. The total amount of mileage in the district is about 40, and the number of stations six. Scanty though it is, this railroad is of considerable importance, as it skirts the Haweli tracts, and is conveniently close to the great timber-cutting industries of the Banjar and Motinala Ranges. It is possible that an extension of the line will be made connecting Bamhni or Chiraidongri with Bilaspur, but up till now no definite action has been taken in this direction. A few miles beyond the north-east border of the district runs the Katni-Bilaspur section of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway, and much of the produce of the district finds its way across the Rewah border to Paili (Birsinghpur Station), from where it is carried by rail to Katni and Jubbul

pore. As soon as some new roads which are now under contemplation, are completed, the south-eastern part of the district will be connected with other stations of this line, and the difficulties of road transport will be considerably lessened.

186. So late as the year 1868 Mandla enjoyed an unpleasant notoriety as a place where roads were practically non-existent, and an unwary traveller stood a fair chance of dying from thirst or starvation. The total sum allotted for road-work was Rs. 1000, of which the greater part was exhausted in keeping open the one great road of the district, that which leads to Jubbulpore. In other parts of the district, where roads were unknown, the only means of transport were herds of pack-bullocks, owned as a rule by Banjaras, a Gypsy caste, who bought the cultivator's produce and carried it to the larger bazaars or railway stations. Since those dark days however a great improvement has come about, and though many of the roads are of an indifferent quality, they are at any rate more satisfactory than the narrow foot tracks of former years. The finest and only first class road in the district is the fifty miles of metalled road leading from Mandla to Jubbulpore. It is passable at all times and seasons, except occasionally for two or three hours in the rains, when the causeways at Balai, Hingna and the Gour river may be under water. From Mandla three more roads radiate north-east, south-east, and south-west; that which leads south-west towards Seoni is metalled for ten miles, as far as Bamhni, and that far is passable for carts. It follows the alignment of the new railway line, and is considerably used between stations. Beyond Bamhni however the surface is very indifferent; for although a layer of murram has been laid over the black soil and a certain amount of drainage has been done, in some places during the rains it is little better than a mud-track, along which nothing more than foot traffic is possible. No other road

Roads.

in the district is metalled for any length, and cart traffic is impossible in the rains. South-east from Mandla runs the Bilaspur road; for the first twelve miles, in the course of which it traverses the rich Hirdenagar tracts, it is of class II-B, and afterwards of class III. The Mandla-Dindori road leads north-east from the town, and is metalled for the first three miles only, the majority of it being class II-B. Most of its importance is derived merely from the fact that it connects the Tahsili of Dindori with the District Head-quarters, but a certain amount of traffic finds its way along it to the railway at Maharajpur. From Dindori a class II-B road goes north-west to Jubbulpore, linking the north part of Dindori Tahsil with the neighbouring district. Ten miles from Dindori on this road an important class II-B road branches off north-east to Birsinghpur, the station of Paili, on the Bilaspur-Katni extension of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway. The distance from Dindori to Paili is 42 miles, and the road is of a very indifferent quality. Considering the very considerable amount of traffic that passes along it, it should certainly be raised in class; for the foundation is murram, and except for bridging the Johilla the expense would not be excessive. Another road, 40 miles in length, goes south-east from Dindori towards Amarkantak, but the making of it is not yet completed. As soon as it is available for cart traffic, the eastern part of the district will be open to direct communication with Rewah State, produce will find a better market, and the value of those tracts will be considerably enhanced.

Inter-village Communications.

187. Mandla possesses very few even of the simple village tracts that are so common in other districts. Rough pathways alone exist in any number; these have been made by the hosts of wandering Banias, Telis, and Banjaras, who with their great herds of pack-bullocks annually traverse the district from end to end. The pack-bullock, it is true, goeth wherever he listeth, but in the main

the traders have kept to certain well-recognised paths. The track is little more than an indication of the way, a narrow ribbon of dust a foot in width, winding over hill and down dale, through cultivated plains or gloomy forests. The pack-bullock is a feature of the country side, and, even when good roadways have been made, it will be long before the outlying villages can dispense with him to bring their produce to the trade centres. A typical track of the pack-bullock is the narrow way that leads from Dindori to Samnapur and Bichchea. Many are the tons of produce carried along this track, but throughout its whole length it is impassable for a bullock cart. In the rains, when the dust of the tracks is converted into mud, inter-village communications are practically cut off. Among the children a common means of locomotion is a pair of stilts or *giri*. These are generally made of bamboo, the cross piece or foot rest, also of bamboo, being bound on to the upright with some ingenious kind of lashing at a height of six inches, a foot, or two feet, above the level of the ground. The stilts certainly have the advantage of raising the user above the mud, and when he is in motion, he can make a dolorous kind of music by grating the foot-rest against the lashings. This pastime is known as "dancing", but a specially trained ear is essential to its proper enjoyment. An experienced stilt-walker can balance himself on one stilt, and use the other as a weapon of offence or defence; and it is no infrequent sight to see a couple of such persons engaging in a single-stick contest when perched like storks on one leg only.

Trade Routes.

188. Most of the wealth of Mandla lies in the rich south-western parts of the district. The rice and wheat is brought by cart or bullock from the village *kallians* (threshing-floors) to the stations at Bambni, Mandla or Pindrais, from which it is despatched by train to Jubbulpore or the west. Along the Mandla-Jubbulpore road trade sets in two directions. From the villages north of Narainganj agricultural produce is

carted into Jubbulpore, but villages south of this spot find it more profitable to send their grain into Mandla, despatching it thence by train. To the south the Mandla-Bilaspur road not only receives all the produce of Hirdenagar and its neighbouring villages, but is also much used by timber merchants. The logs cut in the Motinala and Banjar Reserves are transported along this road as far as the Nerbudda at Mandla, but instead of being ferried or floated across the river and sent by train from Mandla Station they are taken back by the Mandla-Seoni road as far as Bamhni. If the logs are intended to be used as sleepers, they are laid out in an imposing array along the railway line, where at stated intervals a servant of the Railway Company, that has purchased them, comes to inspect them. Much time, labour, and money is wasted by the necessity of having to take the timber almost into Mandla before it can be shifted on to the Mandla-Bamhni Road, and recently a road has been begun, which will connect Anjania (on the Bilaspur Road) with Bamhni and cut off the unnecessary corner at Mandla. The trade of eastern Mandla and the southern tracts of Dindori is carried by pack-bullocks along a very indifferent track, which leads from Ramgarh to the headquarters town by way of Ghugri and Ramnagar. From Dindori Tahsil trade sets along three well-marked routes. The southern parts, which are separated from Dindori town by trackless mountains, deep rivers and dense jungles, have to send their produce due east to Gorela (Pendra Road Station) in Bilaspur. The important *harra*, wheat, and oil trade of the region round Dindori goes to Birsinghpur in Rewah State, to be entrained for Jubbulpore. From Shahpura and the eastern tracts of Dindori Tahsil the produce goes north-west along the Kundum Road to Jubbulpore.

Adequacy of the present means of communication.

189. Now that the cultivated area in Mandla is expanding widely, the present means of transporting the produce to market is becoming more and more

unsatisfactory. If transport is expensive, the profit is less, and the sellers from outlying villages cannot compete with those who have had no transport expenses to defray. The next few years will see a great improvement in communications. As regards the so-called "Garden of Mandla," the rich south-eastern tract, a pair of roads is about to be made joining Dithori to Chiraidongri and Dithori to Pindrai. When these are completed, Dithori will have to be connected with Maharajpur and Mandla, to complete the chain and open out the whole of that important tract. Another much-needed improvement, which has lately been taken in hand, is the construction of a road joining Anjania on the Bilaspur road with Bamhni Railway Station. As soon as this connection is made, the heavy produce of southern Mandla, both grain and timber, will be carried direct to Bamhni without having to come by the roundabout way *via* Mandla. In the north of the district it is proposed to make a road connecting the Lakhanpur tract with the Mandla-Jubbulpore road somewhere near the causeway over the Gour river. At present the produce of this particularly fruitful country has to be carried most of the way by pack-bullocks, but when a *pakka* road is made, cart traffic will be possible. Similarly a little further east, the Niwas tract, which is traversed by no roadway, will be connected by a "feeder" with the Jubbulpore road at Barela. To open up a means of communication between Shahpura and Mandla a road is under contemplation, which will pass through Niwas and Mokas and cut the Mandla-Jubbulpore road at Phulsagar, about 9 miles north of Mandla. A road is also being constructed between Dindori and Amarkantak to meet the third class road already made by Bilaspur District between Amarkantak and Pendra Road Railway Station. The next most urgently required improvement in these parts is a feeder road which will connect the land-locked country round Bajag with the Dindori-Amarkantak road at Karanjia.

CHAPTER VI.

FORESTS AND MINERALS.

FORESTS.

190. Excluding the Dhanwahi Range, which for administrative reasons has been included in Jubbulpore Forest Division, the territorial limits of Mandla Forest Division coincide with those of the civil district. The area of Government Forests in the Division amounts in all to 1914 square miles, and is divided into six Ranges, Shahpura, Dindori, Jagmandal, Mandla, Motinala, and Banjar. That these are large and unwieldy, there is no doubt, and suggestions have been made to make a seventh range which will include the forests round Bajag, and thus reduce the size of the Dindori and Shahpura Ranges. The most important forests however are those of Motinala and the Banjar, where the *sal* (Shorea robusta) is very prolific. The *sal* is in fact the chief timber tree of the district, and its exploitation in these localities is regulated according to the directions of two working plans, covering an area of 62,512 and 144,508 acres respectively, in the Banjar and Motinala Ranges. In the two years 1909—1911 the quantity of *sal* cut in the Banjar Reserve was 40,000 cubic feet, and in Motinala 63,000 cubic feet.

Forest area.

191. Captain Forsyth, writing of Mandla some forty years ago, describes the forests as follows: "The Mykat (Maikal) "range, and the radiating spurs which separate the plateau, "are mostly clothed with forests of the sal tree, which here, "as elsewhere, almost monopolises the parts where it grows. "The *saj* alone grows in any quantity along with it. "Some of the hills are covered with the ordinary species "of forest trees of other parts; the species of vegetation

Forest types.

"appearing, as I have said before, to depend much on the "geological formation. The valleys themselves are generally "open and free from all underwood, dotted here and there "by belts and islands of the noble sal trees, and altogether "possessing much of the character ascribed to the Ameri-"can prairies. In their lowest parts the soil is deep, "black and rich, covered with a growth of strong tall "grasses. As the valleys merge into the hilly ranges, the "soils become lighter and redder, from the lateritic topping "that here overlies the basaltic and granitic bases of the "hills; the grasses are less rank and coarse; and in many "places springs of clear, cold water bubble up, clothing "the country with belts of perpetual verdure, and confer-"ring on it an aspect of freshness very remarkable in a "country of such comparatively small elevation in the "centre of India. Everything combines to deprive this "region of the sterile and inhospitable appearance worn "by even most upland tracts during the hot season. The "sal tree is almost the only evergreen forest tree in India. "Throughout the summer its glossy-dark green foliage re-"flects the light in a thousand vivid tints; and just when "all other vegetation is at its worst, a few weeks before "the gates of heaven are opened in the annual monsoon, "the sal selects its opportunity of bursting into a fresh "garment of the brightest and softest green. But for the "bamboo thickets on the higher hills, whose light feathery "foliage beautifully supplements the heavier masses of the "sal that cling to their skirts the scene would present "nothing peculiar to the landscape of a tropical country." The lines quoted above aptly describe the general impression conveyed by a birdseye view of the Mandla jungles. Taken in detail however they may be divided into four almost distinct types :—

(i) *Pure sal.*—In practically all the well-watered valleys of the south, and especially in the Banjar and Motinala Reserves, the *sal* (Shorea robusta) grows in rich profusion,

unmixed with any other species. It is possessed of an inexhaustible reproductive power. The seeds are shed in millions, and the seedling, shooting rapidly above the danger zone of jungle fires, grows straight and tall, before it begins to spread abroad its branches. A well-grown tree will attain to great dimensions, its girth frequently measuring as much as six or eight feet. The trunks, rising sheer and branchless from the ground, form lofty colonnades, which divide the forest into shady aisles ; and here in the heat of the day may be found great herds of barasinga, or sometimes sambhur and the much-prized bison.

(ii) *Sal mixed with other species.*—In the eastern parts of the district, sloping up to Amarkantak, where the Vindhyas and Satpuras meet, a hybrid sal jungle is found. There however the sal is of poor quality, and rarely reaches a girth of more than three or four feet. Moreover, it has lost its monopoly of the forest, and no longer grows in solitary state, but is surrounded by all the other Mandla species.

(iii). *Mixed forest.*—This type, which is common to all parts of the Central Provinces, is found more particularly in the northern, central and western parts of Mandla. Provided the soil is suitable, any kind of tree may be found in a mixed forest, but the most important in Mandla are the teak (Tectona grandis), *saj* (Terminalia tomentosa), *bija* (Pterocarpus Marsupium), *lendia* (Lagerstrœmia parviflora), *mohwa* (Bassia latifolia), *achar* (Buchannia latifolia), *khair* (Acacia Katechu), *tendu* (Diospyros melanoscylon), *harra* (Terminalia chebula), and *dhawa* (Anogeissus latifolia).

(iv). *Grass lands.*—In the heart of the pure sal forests there are scores of wide open glades covered with luxuriant grasses. The line of demarcation, where the sal forest ends and the grass lands begin, is always sharp and distinct, owing probably to frost or some unfavourable quality in the soil, which is fatal to the trees. These glades are much sought after by graziers ; for with their rich grasses

and perennial streams they form a hot-weather paradise to the thirsty, sun-baked cattle.

Bamboos.

192. In some parts of the district bamboos grow in abundance, especially in the Mandla Jagmandal and Banjar Ranges. In the north however round Shahpura and Dindori they are very scarce. Two species occur in the district: the common *bans* or bamboo (Dendrocalamus strictus) and the more infrequent *Kattang* bamboo (Bambusa arundinacea) which curiously enough grows wild in a few parts of the Jagmandal Range. The favourite locality for a bamboo clump is the soft and more or less sodden soil along the banks of rivers and nallahs, and it is hard to find a view more beautiful than the Nerbudda near Ramnagar, as it flows between a spacious avenue of these graceful trees. At long intervals the bamboos seed in profusion; in Motinala and Dindori a general seeding of the bamboos took place in the famine year, 1900, and provided a bountiful means of subsistence to the forest tribes. The bamboos themselves are of considerable commercial value; the Forest Department derives a good income from their sale, the figures in 1909-10 reaching the sum of Rs. 7417.

Forest Management.

193. Taking the year 1909-10 as typical of the last decade the income of the Forest Department exceeded the expenditure by Rs. 62,788, the receipts for that year amounting to Rs. 1,27,146 and the charges to Rs. 64,358. The income is derived from three sources, which are known as major forest produce, minor forest produce, and " miscellaneous ", in which last all other sources of income are included. These three, major produce, minor produce and miscellaneous, contribute 25 per cent., 70 per cent. and 5 per cent. respectively of the gross earnings. By "major produce" the sal tree is generally understood ; for teak is not very plentiful, nor is it exploited to the same extent as the former. The sal timber may be inferior to the teak for carpentry, but is its superior in many

ways. It has a straight, firm grain, which enables it to stand an immense amount of crushing, thus making it the most suitable of all woods for railway-sleepers. The easiest means of transporting it would be by floating it down the Banjar and other rivers to the railway stations, but unfortunately it will not float by itself and has to be supported by bamboos.

Minor forest produce includes *harra*, hides, horns, lac, grazing, bamboos and grass. The right to collect the minor produce is leased out for specified periods over a defined area, or else the produce is removed by persons, who have "commuted" by payment of a fixed sum annually. Harra is by far the most important. It is found in abundance in the Shahpura, Dindori and parts of the Motinala Range, but in other tracts the trees are few and far between. The harra fruit is commercially known as myrabolam, and is exported to England for tanning. Lac, which used to be a very valuable and lucrative product, has now declined so much in price, that contractors are very loath to take up contracts in it; in fact, a Gond in one of his more expansive moments was heard to remark that it was no longer worth the risk of stealing from Rewah State. The principal trees, on which it is propagated, are the *kosam* (Schleichera trijuga), *palās* (Butea frondosa), *ghont* (Zizyphus xylopyera) and the *ber* (Zizyphus jujuba). The lac is deposited on the twigs of these trees by an insect, and the twigs are broken off and sold. Captain Forsyth states that about twenty pounds can be procured annually from a tree, provided any of the insects are left on it to breed. "But," he goes on to say, "just as often as not the improvident wild man will cut down the whole tree to save himself the trouble of climbing." Similarly the sal trees are ringed by the aboriginals for the *ral* or resin, which bubbles out of the fissures thus made. The ringing of sal is now forbidden, but no doubt a certain amount of this destructive industry continues undetected. The forest tribes used to barter the lac and resin for salt,

beads, or poison for their arrow heads. The lac has many uses, one of them being its manufacture into bangles for women. Hides are exported to England and elsewhere, only a small quantity being kept back for local purposes, such as the manufacture of water-bags, buckets and shoes. The horns of the chithal, or spotted deer, are of more commercial value than the sambhur : they are most suitable for making knife-handles or other ornaments, and are sold at the rate of ten annas the seer. Sambhur and barasinga horns fetch only four annas the seer, much of the horn being of no use for manufacture. A certain revenue is derived from the tubers, such as the *Baichandi* and *Tikhur*. The former is a kind of wild yam, which in its natural state is accounted poisonous, but after being steeped or boiled in water and cut into slices it forms the only food which a Brahman can eat on a fast-day without damage to his conscience. *Tikhur* is a kind of wild arrowroot.

Grazing and Commutation.

194. The grazing revenue of the year 1909-10 was Rs. 48,665 of which Rs. 38,533 was collected under the consolidated license system, while nomadic and other licenses brought in Rs. 10,332. This year, 1912, the consolidated license system has been replaced by the Nagpur grazing rules, which are in force in every other district of the Province. The main principle is to charge a nominal sum for the grazing of those cattle, which are essential to cultivation, a little larger sum for a few extra cattle, but a high rate for cattle, that are kept for commercial purposes only. The ordinary cultivator is let off lightly, but the large owner, who breeds she-buffaloes for ghi and milk, will have to pay more heavily than before. Under commutation for *paidawar* and *nistar*, which is optional for all, the villagers pay a fixed annual sum. In return for this they are allowed to remove green timber of all but five kinds from the forests, as well as dry fuel, dry bamboos, grass, thorns, *bakkal* (bark-rope), edible roots, and fruits, provided

they are required for *bona fide* domestic purposes, and not for sale or barter.

195. Bewar cultivation is the ancestral cultivation of the Baigas. Those children of the forests used to hold it a crime to lacerate the breast of Mother Earth with iron, and, finding the fruits of the forest too precarious as a sole means of subsistence, had recourse to a kind of compromise known as *bewar*. In the cold weather they choose some tract of land suitable for their purpose, possibly a scrubby patch of jungle, but as likely as not a magnificent grove of sal; the trees are all cut down and allowed to lie where they fall, until the hot weather has made them dry and inflammable. They are then fired and the ashes spread over the ground. As soon as the rains have broken, the soil thus prepared is lightly dressed with an axe, kodon or kutki is sown, and nothing remains but to wait for the crop to ripen. Naturally enough, bewar cultivation often resulted in the denudation of the hill sides, and it was at one time feared that the water-supply of the country might be seriously affected by it. In 1890 therefore after several reams of correspondence had been written on the question, it was decided to remove bewar-practising Baigas from Blocks Nos. 54 and 62 in the Dindori Range, which were at that time subjected to unrestricted bewar, to a defined area of some 24,000 acres in block No. 54 known as the Baiga Reservation. Since that year all Baigas living in Government Forests outside the Reservation and refusing to move into it have been forbidden to practise bewar. The Forest Department was then entrusted with the task of wooing the Baigas to ordinary methods of cultivation. They were located in Forest villages, and given seed-grain, plough-cattle and taccavi loans free of interest. The result appears to be highly satisfactory; for the plough has supplanted the axe in most of the fields owned by Baigas. In actual fact however the Baiga has not been reclaimed; he has

Bewar cultivation.

learnt enough wisdom to know that Government prefers a ploughed field to a bewar, and has sub-let his land to men who will plough it for him—a method which is gratifying to both the authorities and to himself, but is no indication of his own agricultural regeneration. Some 71 families still remain, which have not even made the pretence of abandoning their ancestral methods. They may perhaps take to the plough in the course of years, but the change will be a gradual one. Four inhabited villages exist in the Baiga Reservation. The area allotted to bewar works out at one and a third acres per axe per annum, and the tax levied annually is Rs. 2 per axe. The *bewarable* portion of each village is divided into felling-series worked on a rotation of twenty-one years. As soon as the Baiga Reservation is exhausted, some fresh arrangement will have to be made. They themselves have no anxiety as to the future. In earlier times, when the question of educating the Baiga was first mooted, a certain amount of interest in high quarters was aroused. They were humoured and encouraged by all kinds of concessions and privileges. For many years they paid no rent for their fields, while systematic poaching in Government Forest, on which at first they depended for their living, was winked at by the authorities. These concessions have been stopped, but they are still inclined to regard themselves as a specially favoured class, the chosen people of the Local Government. It is certainly a regrettable fact in their eyes, that the so-called "lords of the forest" should have to abandon their easy, roving existence under the greenwood tree, and like inferior races,

"Sow the seed and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
"Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine, and oil."

Therefore, though somewhat resigned to their lot, they still look back with sorrow to the days of their liberty, when the axe and the arrow provided them with all the necessities of life.

196. Of the malguzari area, which amounts in all to 2300 square miles, 208 square miles are classed as tree forest, 668 as scrub jungle and grass, and 276 as roads, hills, and nallahs. In some places the area under timber and grass is insufficient to supply the nistar needs of the cultivators, particularly in the neighbourhood of Government Forests, where the cultivators have to supplement the malguzari area by commuting for nistar and taking out licenses for the use of Government grazing. There are however a number of large villages, as, for example, Singharpur, Mawai, Ghugri, and Mokas, where the *abadi* or public area is more than ample for the wants of everybody, and the proprietor of the village can derive a steady income from selling the produce. Mango trees are not very plentiful except in the neighbourhood of Mandla; they belong to the malguzars, who sell the crop annually, for sometimes as much as Rs. 400 for a grove. From the fruit of the harra also and from mahua flowers they can make an income of no mean size.

Malguzari Forest.

197. No special areas have been set aside as fuel preserves; dry firewood is generally obtainable in village scrub jungle, or else can be obtained under a commutation license from Government Forests. Occasionally, when fuel is scarce, the villagers intentionally kill a tree by ringing its bark, and, as soon as it is dead, request leave to cut it down and thus rid the village of an encumbrance. A considerable quantity of firewood is washed down by the Nerbudda in the rains; formerly the collection of this was let out on contract, but now everybody can take up a position at some coign of vantage on the river bank and reap a harvest of drift-wood, that will keep him in fuel for the year. Large quantities of wood are exported to Jubbulpore from malguzari forests on the north-west borders of the district.

Fuel and grazing.

Village cattle are allowed to graze in village lands free of charge, though the malguzar generally takes a small present from the villagers for granting them this privilege. Where cultivation has so much reduced the available pasturage that it is insufficient for the herd, they are grazed in Government Forests on payment of the prescribed dues. It is assumed that a cultivator requires four head of cattle for each plough used by him in cultivation. If a man possesses one plough, he can graze four bullocks or cows in Government Forest at one anna per head per annum. For cattle in excess of the number actually required for the plough he has to pay at higher rates. In the rare instances of a village having an excess of good pasturage, the cattle of neighbouring villages are allowed to graze on it on payment of money to the proprietor. The most popular grazing lands are the grass savannahs in the heart of the sal forests. In these parts the grass grows thick and tender, retaining its verdure until late in the hot-weather months, and cattle are brought even from distant districts to enjoy the rich pasturage.

Roadside Arboriculture.

198. Of late years no little care has been bestowed on roadside arboriculture, and the main roads are well equipped in this respect. Those which lead from Mandla to Jubbulpore, Seoni, Bilaspur, and Dindori, are shaded by avenues of *mango, babul, sissoo* and *bakain*. They are kept up by the Public Works Department at an annual cost of between one and two thousand rupees. Dindori village however is situated in the middle of a great plain on which the frost renders it almost impossible to grow trees. Experiments have been made, but only the *sissoo* and *bakain* have been found capable of withstanding the rigours of a Dindori winter. Government is also spending about Rs. 400 a year in providing the Dindori Ryotwari estate with groves; several have been already planted, and future programmes include a budget for this purpose.

Mines and Quarries.

199. Captain Forsyth writes of the mineral wealth of the district as follows :—"The resources of the country in iron and "other mineral wealth have never been fully examined, "though it is evident on the surface that they are abundant. Gold is washed out of the sands of more than "one of the streams, in small quantities, however, which "barely repay the labour, and it is probable that its lodes "are buried in the quartz of the primitive rocks deep below "the flow of volcanic material that has overlaid them." The volcanic stratum still forms an irresistible barrier between the miner and the gold, and he has to be content with the iron ore, which is found upon the surface. This occurs in most parts of the district, particularly in a hill between Mohgaon, Sarasdoli Anuwar, and Murserai in the Raigarh tract, and also in the Phen valley. The iron-smelters of the district are a sub-tribe of Gonds known as Agarias. Their methods, which are very primitive, have been described in the preceding chapter ; the industry is however in a precarious state owing to competition with imported iron, and survives only because lack of communications prevents the importation of foreign metal into outlying villages. By working hard an Agaria can manage two smeltings a day in each furnace, about one seer of refined iron being the outturn of each smelting. In cases where the Agarias have to obtain their material from Reserved Forests, the following fees are levied :—

Iron and other metals.

For one furnace	Rs.	8	per annum.
For two furnaces	,,	12	,, ,,
For three ,,	,,	15	,, ,,

These fees include the royalty on all iron ore quarried and the price of the fuel used in smelting. The net earnings are not more than Rs. 30 from each furnace per annum. Although encouraged by the graduated scale of fees to multiply the number of furnaces, one household of Agarias

seldom or never keeps up more than one. Smelting ceases during the rains, and the smelters have to supplement their earnings by other means, generally agriculture or ordinary daily labour. In 1909 it was reported that the district contained 65 furnaces, in which it was estimated that about 6128 maunds of iron ore were smelted, the total yield of refined iron being about 665 maunds. The iron is used locally in making axes, arrow heads, and agricultural implements for sale in the neighbouring villages.

Quarries.

200. Limestone of medium quality is common in many parts of the district. The most important quarries are those at Mugdarrà and Kakaya, but there is no export trade. The limestone is quarried only in small quantities to meet local requirements, generally for well, school or causeway building. At Ranimati five miles south of Bichchea Fuller's earth is found and at Sahasradhara near Mandla there are traces of manganese, but the quantity is insufficient to make the working of it a profitable business.

CHAPTER VII.

FAMINE.

Famine History.

201. Previously to the cession of Mandla to the British the famines and scarcities that occurred from time to time seem to have been the result of political rather than meteorological conditions. Since the beginning of the eighteenth century civil war in Mandla itself had seriously hampered the work of cultivation, and such crops as survived the ravages of home-bred armies were generally fired by the roving bands of Scindia, Saugor, and the Pindaries. The first famine of which any real information can be obtained fell in 1818, the year when Mandla was formally handed over to the British. Apparently the autumn rains were short, but excessive rain fell in the winter months; the whole of the rabi crops failed, the distress being rendered more acute by an outbreak of cholera, which practically decimated the population. From 1823 to 1827 all the plateau districts suffered from a succession of scanty harvests. A letter written by Major Wardlow in 1831 speaks of "the severe calamities to which the district has been subjected from the destruction of crops by hail and blight, which has caused cultivators to abscond and the land to be thrown out of cultivation." So severe was the distress, that the quinquennial settlement of 1825 had to be cancelled in its second year, and another lighter settlement brought out. In 1833 the autumn rains entirely failed and the soil was too hard to be ploughed for the rabi sowings. Consequently there was no rabi harvest, and large quantities of rice had to be imported from Chhattisgarh. The price of grain, which a few years previously had been sold in Raipur at the rate of 400 seers to the rupee, now rose to 8 seers per rupee, a price which was far beyond the pockets of the needy

aboriginal. In 1868, however, a year of widespread scarcity over Central India, the aboriginal tribes were but slightly affected. In the first place having an abundance of jungle fruit and vegetables at hand they were only semi-dependent on cultivation for their daily wants ; and, secondly, the light millet crops, which were, and are, grown over the greater part of the district, were not nearly so badly affected by the shortage of rain. In fact, the Gonds were able to export grain to the famished lowlands of Balaghat.

Events leading to the Famine of 1896-7.

202. For the next twenty-four years the district enjoyed a succession of favourable seasons and plentiful harvests, until people began to believe that the days of scarcity were gone, never to return. In 1892 however this sense of security was slightly impaired by an unexpected superabundance of rain in the last months of the year; the kodon and rice crop had been as successful as ever, but the wheat in the lower tracts was swamped after sowing, and the rabi outturn of 1893 was much reduced. From then onwards the whole Province was visited by a cycle of wet years, which, while doing no injury to the kharif, more or less ruined the rabi crops. In September, October and November 1893, instead of the seven or eight inches of rain which cultivators were expecting, their calculations were confounded by a series of downpours, which either postponed the sowings till too late or washed away the seedlings. Again in the following year the cold weather months were visited with a peculiarly prolific rainfall. The damage fell most on the rich, water holding soils, where—

" The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
" Had rotted ere his youth attained a beard. "

The higher and poorer soils did not suffer so severely; it is true that less farm-labour was required from those tracts, and food became a little more scarce, but this was counterbalanced by Government giving minor forest produce free to the villagers, and organising a certain amount

of road-work for those thrown out of their ordinary employments.

203. In 1895 however nature suddenly changed her caprice and the Province, after being practically waterlogged for three years, suddenly found itself in the throes of a still more disastrous drought. In September, October, and November the rains altogether failed; in Mandla less than three inches were registered, though the ordinary rainfall was seven and a half inches and that of the two preceding years nearly seventeen. This district is largely dependent on the hill millets for its sustenance, and has practically no resources to fall back upon in case of a really bad failure of the kharif crop. The drought of 1895 reduced the crop outturn by more than 50 per cent. and the cultivators, compelled to satisfy their hunger with the grain which they had stored for seed, were unable to sow the normal rabi area. Such seed as was sown was not to produce any return; for germination was defective in the parched fields, and after germination the young seedlings withered for want of water.

The dry years.

204. With all the produce of the jungle at their doors, the people of Mandla were not so badly hit by the scarcity as those of less well-wooded districts. The mortality during the hot weather of this year except for cholera was not abnormally high. A certain amount of relief work was found to be necessary at Mandla, Narainganj, Ghugri and Shahpura, but the number of people employed on these works was insignificant, at the utmost only 4000 persons. The monsoon of 1896 began well, and there was hope that, if a normal kharif harvest was gathered, all distress would be over. In August however the rains came to an untimely end, and prices of food grains leapt up with a bound. The crop outturn which in 1895-6 had been 44 per cent. of the average, sank this year to 27 per cent. The kharif and rabi harvests amounted to 11,195 and 17,000 tons respectively, whereas

Outbreak of Famine, 1896.

the annual demand of the district was 47,140 tons. This startling deficit of over 18,000 tons is reflected in the price of the cheapest grain, which rose by 194 per cent. The scarcity was emphasised by the vast number of immigrants from other districts. Although lying off the main road between Jubbulpore and Nagpur, Mandla was visited by scores of starving people in search of work or charity. Residents of Rewah flocked across the eastern border, and men from Bandelkhand, Baghelkhand, and even the distant city of Allahabad, were found wandering aimlessly in the heart of the forests.

Relief works.

205. In June 1896, although distress was not acute, the number of hungry travellers, who found their way to Mandla, made it necessary to start a relief work near the town. With the coming of the monsoon, however, the distress was accentuated, and relief works were opened at Naraingani, Ghugri, and Shahpura. In November the Public Works Department took over charge of the operations, and works were opened on the Shahpur-Shahpura, the Mandla-Jubbulpore, and the Mandla-Bilaspur roads. In February 1897 another work was started at Mohgaon, and later on, in April, two more works at Hirdenagar and the Dindori-Shahpur road. The number of persons on relief works rose to a maximum of 18,000 in June, 1897, but as soon as the rains broke and kharif sowings began, the numbers began to dwindle.

In December 1896 poor houses were opened at Mandla and Dindori, and 17 relief centres under the charge of patwaris were established, the work being generally in the form of tank-making. The Forest Department also organised four local works for the benefit of aboriginals in forest villages. The value of the work done was Rs. 33,000, which was just a third of the expenditure involved. In February 1897, however, the authorities began to realise that, though relief works and poor houses were in full swing, the distress

was still acute in aboriginal villages, and as yet showed no signs of abatement. The reason was that the Gonds and Baigas, always suspicious of strangers *et dona ferentes*, took refuge in the forests at the approach of a relieving officer and refused to be tempted to the relief works, preferring to wring a scanty livelihood from the jungle than be forced to work at an uncongenial task in a remote and unknown region. Even if a few of them did overcome their scruples and find their way to a work centre, it is recorded that "at the least breath of censure from an overseer or the least fall in the scale of wages, their powers of endurance would shrivel up, and they would return to their native haunts and habits." It appeared as though their knowledge of the resources of the jungle rendered them independent of outside help, and the authorities were hopelessly deceived. As soon however as the monsoon broke, the relieving officers recognised the vital necessity of a system of "village relief." For by this time the forest had ceased to yield its fruits, and the forest tribes were compelled to satisfy their cravings with roots, damp leaves and toadstools. This unwholesome diet coupled with the diseases it engendered rendered them physically incapable of making the long journey to a relief centre, even if they had been willing to venture on it, and it was clear that unless help was actually brought to their doors, they would simply die of starvation in the villages. Tardily enough therefore beneath the full fury of an Indian monsoon, in a district possessed of no roads, no bridges, and no transport, the authorities decided to develop the system of village relief. All the forces of nature, says an eye witness,—swollen torrents, trackless mountains, impracticable jungles, and disease, which laid low alike the sufferer and the bringer of relief,—all were arrayed on the side of famine. Somehow or other the relieving officers forced their food supplies through deep jungles and flooded rivers, and penetrated into the inmost recesses of the hills, where

their assistance was most urgently required. People ceased to die of starvation, but not to suffer from privation and want. Moreover in August, when prospects began to look a little brighter, the inmates of the Mandla and Dindori poor houses started to return to their villages, and on their arrival in a destitute condition they too became an additional drain on village-relief. The greatest number in receipt of this form of help was 22,158 in October 1897, but by the end of September when the maize crop had ripened and was harvested, the numbers rapidly diminished and actual distress almost entirely disappeared.

Expenditure.

206. The sum of Rs. 2,15,591 was received from the Indian Charitable Fund and distributed among destitute persons in the shape of grain, blankets, or capital to enable them to make a fresh start either as agriculturists or artisans. Jagannath Parshad Chowdhry maintained a private kitchen in Mandla, at which food was daily given to 40 persons, the expenditure amounting to Rs. 1604. The charity of the Missionaries of the Gond Mission was beyond all praise. Not only did they feed and clothe a great number of starving people, their station at Marpha alone supporting 500, but they also battled with a severe outbreak of cholera, supplied seed grain to the surrounding villages, and finally drafted the people back to their homes with a present of Rs. 4 for every person. About Rs. 8000 were remitted or suspended from the Land Revenue, which, it must be remembered, is derived chiefly from the Haweli crops and not the light hill-side cultivation. More welcome to the poorer classes was the remission of Forest dues, by which they benefited to the extent of Rs. 5370 in cash and an inestimable amount in convenience; moreover the next year's demand was suspended until the famine was a thing of the past. Lavish grants of taccavi were also made, to set up the cultivators in seed grain and bullocks.

Mortality and Crime.

207. It is impossible to give any idea of the death-rate from famine or emaciation; the aboriginals had so undermined their constitutions by a ravenous consumption of jungle produce, that they succumbed in thousands to the fevers of the rains. Scarcity of good food was thus the primary, but not the direct, cause of the appalling death-rate. In April 1897 the death-rate per mille was the comparatively low figure of 4·21; four months later, when cholera, fever, and starvation were rampant, it rose to 16·43, and next month to 16·66, the highest in the whole Province. During these disastrous days nearly 10 per cent. of the population were in receipt of relief, and a sixth of the population is reported to have died. Naturally enough, the "calendars of crime" reflected the general distress. Before the establishment of village-relief removed the source of temptation, robberies, house-breakings and dacoities were frequent; eleven murders were committed that year, in one of which a Gond killed and ate a little girl. Fear of starvation outweighed that of the prisons; cattle thefts exceeded the last year's figures by over 400, and it is certain that a large number were committed, that were never reported at all. The offenders were generally Gonds and Baigas, who stole the animals to appease the pangs of hunger.

The Famine of 1900.

208. In 1897-8 the area under crop was 25 per cent. less than it had been before the years of famine. The kharif however gave a bumper harvest, and the rabi was well up to the average. From June to October in 1898 the rainfall registered only 50·13 inches, and the rabi reaped in 1899 was much impaired by lack of moisture. The rains of 1899 failed altogether, only 27·79 inches being registered for the five monsoon months. The kharif was doomed, and prices leapt up in September, slightly dropped in October, and thenceforward rose slowly but steadily until June 1900, when a delay in the rains sent them

up still further with a bound. Food was very scarce and distress was general. By a curious coincidence the bamboos in the South-Eastern tracts of the district seeded this year, and the forest tribes, besides satisfying their own wants with them, were also able to drive a thriving trade, selling the seed in the big bazaars. The ripening of the maize crop in September 1900 brought the famine to an end.

Relief Works.

209. The lesson taught by the previous famine had not been forgotten. Mr. Gaskin, the Deputy Commissioner, realised that he would achieve nothing by going out into the highways and hedges and compelling the forest tribes to bring their wives and families to distant relief works; the only practicable way of combating the prejudices of the natives was by giving them work near their own houses and organising a system of village-relief. Relief was first started in Kakaria, Ramnagar, Narainganj, and Shahpura Circles, and was gradually extended, until the whole district with the exception of the rich Bamhni Haweli was in receipt of it. Kitchens were opened *pari passu*, and proved to be the most popular form of help. In all some 136 kitchens were opened, the number of persons living on their bounty varying from 15,000 on 26th May to 31,000 in June. Many indigent persons were given work on a road about 30 miles in length, which crossed one of the most distressed tracts in the district. The Forest Department organised a great grass-cutting industry, particularly in Dhanwahi Range, whence transport was more or less easy to Jubbulpore. The general mass of the people were employed on tanks, *bands* (embankments), roads, and ghats; and again the Church Missionary Society Mission was of much assistance in providing food and work for the villages in the neighbourhood of their out-stations. There was no necessity for poor-houses either in Mandla or Dindori.

210. The expenditure, both direct and indirect, on famine relief amounted to more than three lakhs of rupees. For the kharif sowings "taccavi" advances up to Rs. 43,836 were distributed by Government, and Rs. 36,236 were given by the Charitable Fund. More than Rs. 46,000 of Land Revenue were suspended and eventually for the most part remitted. Unlike the famine of 1896-97, on this occasion the people were only too ready to come for help, and there is little doubt that they received charity long before they really needed it, and made no effort to make themselves independent of it. Luckily cholera paid only a very brief visit this year, and prompt action was taken to prevent the spread of infection. There were apparently no deaths from starvation or emaciation, but the population was very much reduced by scores of farm-labourers migrating to other districts in search of employment. In later years these exiles have been returning, a fact which to some extent accounts for the great difference between the census of 1901 and that of 1911.

Expenditure and Mortality.

211. The district had hardly recovered from the seven lean years which culminated in the famine of 1900, before a fresh calamity befell it. The rabi harvest of 1907 was damaged to some extent by unusually heavy rains in February and March. As if to counterbalance this, the monsoon came to an abrupt end in September and the kodon, kutki, and late sown rice crops were a total failure. The normal area sown with rabi in previous years had been over 200,000 acres, but this year owing to general scarcity only 85,000 acres could be sown; and of these the outturn was very small owing to faulty germination and withering from lack of moisture. Signs of distress appeared first in Shahpura, Niwas, Shahpur, Samnapur and Bajag Revenue Circles. The scarcity however was not very severe. Able-bodied men could fend for themselves, but could no longer provide for

The Famine of 1908.

their dependents; the latter, and such as ordinarily made a livelihood by begging, finding the usual source of supply closed to them, were practically the only persons in real need of assistance. To meet this demand a list of "paupers" was drawn up, and a system of village gratuitous relief organised. At the end of April four village works also were opened, but the necessity for them had disappeared by the end of July. The maximum number of persons on the village gratuitous relief list was 6297 in September, the total expenditure being about Rs. 40,000. On the four village works altogether 639 persons were employed at a cost of Rs. 5000. The sum of Rs. 1,33,090 of Land Revenue was remitted, Rs. 4682 was suspended and forest dues to the extent of Rs. 74,000 were also remitted. More than two lakhs were advanced as loans for seed, bullocks, or embankment work. The mortality was very low and no case of death from starvation or emaciation is known. A splendid kharif harvest being reaped, all relief was rapidly stopped and those in receipt of it returned to their usual occupations in field or forest.

There is little doubt that the gratuitous distribution of food has had a demoralising effect on a certain proportion of the population, especially among the children,, who were ready to receive free doles of food as long as they could find anyone generous enough to give it. The famines, disastrous though they were, have however been of some value in breaking down that wall of suspicion and distrust, which the Gonds and Baigas had built up between themselves and the outside world. At that time of universal suffering the inherited prejudices of centuries were to some extent dissolved, and the aboriginal began to develop the little known virtues of confidence and gratitude.

CHAPTER VIII.

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION.

The Aboriginals.

212. Many thousand years ago, in that "dim red dawn of man," when the Aryan race ventured through the North-West Passes and slowly filtered into the heart of India, it found a country partially cultivated by the Dravidians, but mainly clothed in impenetrable forests, the haunt of wild beasts and scarcely less wild men, who hunted in packs and lived on the produce of the jungle. The slow march of civilisation gradually reclaimed more and more of the fertile tracts, driving back the denizens of the forests into regions to which the cultivator had no access. One of these regions was the Satpura plateau; here the savage tribes lived on, untouched by succeeding Aryan migrations or the rise and fall of empires. Their food was the produce of the forest, roots and green's and tender bamboo sprigs; land was common property, the question of ownership only arising when one tribe trespassed in the tract temporarily occupied by another. In course of time however the men of the hills came into contact with the men of the plains, and took to imitating in a clumsy fashion the habits of their neighbours. In this way a rough kind of cultivation was introduced, small tracts of land being broken up and sown with light millets. At the same time they began to grow more civilised, not that they made much progress in this direction; for in the nineteenth century there still remained two tribes, the Madi Gonds and the Binderwas, who roamed the jungle naked, lived on roots and wild fruits, passed the nights in caves or under trees, and at stated periods hunted for strangers to sacrifice to their gods.*

*See Richard Jenkins' Report on the Territories of the Rajah of Nagpur, dated 1827.

Revenue system of the Gonds.

213. The fertility of the Mandla Haweli must soon have attracted the notice of the men of the plains; and when Mandla became part of the Garha-Mandla kingdom and some sort of security was assured, large numbers of Hindu cultivators dared the perils of the unknown and took up land from the Gond proprietors. Owing to the non-existence or deliberate destruction of all official records, our knowledge of the Land Revenue Administration under the Gonds is little more than conjecture. Apparently the policy of the Crown was to encourage the extension of cultivation over lands still unclaimed, and at the same time to provide for their protection. Accordingly large tracts of country, including both cultivated and waste lands, were granted to the Gond Thakurs as zemindaries ; the landholder had to pay a low tribute (which stimulated him to increase the area under cultivation) and to keep up a number of armed retainers, both for his own and his overlord's use.

Marathas.

214. In the year 1781, when the Saugor Marathas finally took possession of Mandla, the old feudal system was altered ; the new-comers were jealous of the existence of any military force besides their own, and cancelling the "zemindari" rights of the old landholders kept them on as taluqdars ; moreover, they assessed them at a revenue which was not only considerably greater than their former tribute, but was also liable to annual variation. The loss of dignity to the landholders involved by this change of title was modified by the use of the word "ubari" in the *patta* or title deeds, but the old zamindars felt the blow very strongly, some of them passively resisting till the Saugor Marathas were ousted by the Bhonsla of Nagpur. The following is a specimen of one of the *pattas* given to a Taluqdar of Patan Ghugri in Mandla:—
"*Sree Mant Maharaj Rajah Sree Sena Sahib Soobah ke Sirkar se*
"this Patta is written, giving to you, Bikar Majit, the Pateli
"of the villages comprising the Taluqas of Patan and Ghugri

"in the District of Mandla. You must cultivate the lands "well, people the villages, and increase their prosperity, "treat the inhabitants with kindness, and oppress or mal-"treat no one. For the waste villages, you are allowed to "hold them two years rent-free, the third year you are to "pay half jama (revenue), and the fourth year their full "value according to the custom of the country. Fines levied "on account of fornication, sums realised for the permitting "widows to re-marry, together with buried or hidden trea-"sure, you are to consider as the property of the State, and "to deliver up accordingly. The jama is fixed as follows:—(here follows a list of villages with the assessed jamas)—"total 92 villages, the ubari of which, being fixed, you will "pay annually and whether you are a loser or gainer by the "estates you must still pay the rents according to agree-"ment." As regards the ordinary village the agent of Government was the patel, who received a *patta* couched in more or less the same terms as the specimen given above. The functions of the patel, besides including an undefined magisterial authority, consisted in apportioning and collecting the rent of his village, for which services he received about one-sixth or one-seventh of the profits of the crops. The patel had no sort of proprietary right in the land; he held office at the pleasure of Government, leased the village for a year, and was liable to summary ejection at the end of that period; and although the office very frequently became hereditary in practice, no son of a patel could claim it on the death of his father, nor could he claim a malikana, if ejected. The cultivator was in a similar position; he entered into a lease with the patel to hold his land for one year (no fixed rent as a rule being laid down, as the patel did not know until the end of the year what revenue he would have to pay to Government). Actually, although a tenant was liable to eviction at the end of twelve months, he was as a rule left in undisturbed possession of the same fields year after year, as an old-established farmer was generally a better rent-payer

than a new-comer. In cases of a personal quarrel between patel and tenant culminating in a vindictive ejection of the tenant, Government generally interfered and restored the former state of harmony.

Methods of assessment under the Marathas.

215. At the beginning of the agricultural year, when the tenant executed his lease with the patel, the revenue demand of Government was unknown; therefore the tenant agreed to pay a share of the revenue proportionate to the size and quality of his holding as compared with those of other tenants. The Central Government after a casual glance at the assessment of previous years, decided on the sum of money that each pargana (or collection of villages) should pay as revenue; the *kamaishdar* or chief revenue officer of each pargana, summoned the patels of his villages, and apportioned out the revenue demand among them according to the capabilities of each village. The patels then collected the rents from the tenants according to the scale laid down in their leases. In some villages, particularly in the Ramgarh division of Mandla, the tenants used to pay rent according to the number of their ploughs. The patel, it appears, only retained one-sixth or one-seventh of the rents received, the remainder being paid into the Government coffers. As Government continually raised its demand for revenue without considering the capability of the people to pay and making no allowance for bad seasons or defalcations, the patel was compelled to exact full payment from the tenants, and distress was generally acute in every village. It was not from the soil, however, that the chief income of Government was derived; there were some thirty-five headings under which the subjects of the Marathas were made to contribute to the public purse, one of the most lucrative being widow marriage. A widow was considered to be the property of the State, and was priced, according to her age, beauty, or accomplishments, at sums varying from Rs. 1,000 downwards.

The people were mulcted in other ways also, as, for instance, when a Rajah of Saugor was married, an additional lakh of rupees was wrung from them to meet the expenses of the wedding.

Early settlements.

216. Mandla and Bargi Parganas were united under the Maratha Government, Mandla being made the headquarters of both. We have no knowledge whatever as to the amount of revenue realised from them; in the worst days of Maratha oppression it is said that ten lakhs were annually collected, but just before the British occupation Mandla and Bargi paid Rs. 75,000 each. By "Mandla" is meant the Mandla Tahsil only; Ramgarh Taluqa paid its own revenue quite separately, though no record of the payments seems ever to have been kept. In the year 1818 however, there was hardly a patel or cultivator in the whole district, who had not been reduced to a state of hopeless beggary; and many of the oldest and most respectable malguzars were so involved in debt that even after the expiration of ten years they were still unable to pay off their arrears. When Mandla Fort was surrendered to General Marshall in May 1818, the occupation of the British was heralded in by a famine and epidemic of cholera. The first and second settlements were for only one year each; both appear to have been made by Mr. Cockerell, and as the collections were easily accomplished, it may be inferred that they were light and moderate. In 1818-1819 the amount of the settlement was Rs. 35,945, and in 1819-1820 Rs. 37,124. This includes only Mandla Tahsil; for Ramgarh was given on ubari tenure to the Lodhi Rajah on a quit-rent of Rs. 2,000 a year. In 1820 the same Mr. Cockerell made a quinquennial settlement on the progressive principle, assessing Mandla at Rs. 55,973, or about Rs. 20,000 more than the first settlement assessment. The sudden increase was due to the extraordinarily high prices that were obtained for rice in the Nagpur market. Owing to the great demand for this commodity during the Maratha

wars, the outturn was found insufficient to supply the needs of the large armies employed on either side, and rice, which had formerly sold at more than a maund per rupee, rose in 1818 to 8 seers per rupee. The patels outbid each other for villages, all desiring to get as many as they could lay hands upon, and both patels and cultivators recklessly extended the area under rice. The new rice lands were assessed in the settlement, but when a few years later rice dropped to Rs. 2-8 per khandi, the cultivators could not afford to pay. Hence in 1825, when a new quinquennial settlement was made, a reduction of over Rs. 9,000 was found necessary, the assessment being Rs. 46,361. Two years later, moreover, in 1827, the quinquennial settlement was cancelled and Major Wardlow made a decennial settlement reducing the previous assessment by Rs. 11,000. In a letter to the Governor-General's Agent in Jubbulpore, dated 12th September 1831, he says of this decennial settlement that "in "making the alterations called for in Mandla, Chhapara, "etc., in consequence of the severe calamities to which this "district has been subjected from the destruction of crops "by hail and blight, which has caused many cultivators to "abscond and the land to be thrown out of cultivation, I "have granted a reduction in each village equal to the "quantity of land which has fallen out of cultivation, and in "those estates where I found much distress to prevail, I have "in addition to that lowered the rates a little, in order that "the cultivators might get out of their embarrassments." From this it is clear that a series of bad harvests had followed the quinquennial settlement of 1825, which together with the rents as then assessed made cultivation unprofitable to the cultivator and drove him into other parts of India. We know also that a cholera epidemic raged throughout the whole district, in one village a fourth of the inhabitants being wiped out in a single week. Major Wardlow records that the settlement of Mandla itself was done by a certain Mr. Stephens: the "Amins" prepared statements showing

in each village the area of land double and single cropped, the area of first and second class kharif soil, and the area that was fit for rabi cultivation only. For double cropped land the Settlement Officer estimated the income after deducting seed expenses to be Rs. 69 per plough and assessed the rent at Rs. 24 (one plough was considered the equivalent of 4 "khandis" or between 8 and 10 acres). Single cropped land was similarly assessed, on the principle that the plough cattle, being used at one season only instead of two, could plough more land.

The period of this settlement however was not a great success from a fiscal point of view. Government was continually interfering between the patel and cultivator, which caused much distrust, confusion, and lack of harmony. The assessment too was based on theory more than fact, with the result that the cultivators were hard put to it to pay their rents.

The settlement of 1837.

217. In 1835 a certain Mr. Martin Bird was told to report on the Revenue administration of the Nerbudda and Saugor territories. Beginning with a strong criticism of the existing methods, he recommended that the Government should sanction a settlement for a long period of years; the revenue demand should be very easy, but remissions should only be granted in the most exceptional circumstances. Furthermore he pointed out that Government by its interference between patel and cultivator was really doing more harm than good, especially to the cultivating classes. In 1837 therefore, in accordance with these recommendations, a twenty-years' settlement was brought out by Major Lowe, first senior Principal Assistant at Jubbulpore. The Mandla demand was reduced to Rs. 26,863, but was to increase slightly after every five years. Time showed however that the cultivators were unable to meet the rising rents, and in 1848 there were between two and three hundred villages *kham Tahsil*, the malguzars having resigned on account of

the heavy revenue. That year therefore the demand was fixed for the rest of the period, and no change was made till 1861, when Captain Waddington brought out a summary settlement for three years. This with annual modifications was continued until the introduction of the Regular Settlement of 1868.

The Regular Settlement, 1868.

218. There was no regular cadastral survey in this settlement, but a field survey was carried out, based on a combination of rough chain measurement and eye survey. Captain Ward, the Settlement Officer, explains in his report how that as the *khasras* or field registers were written up in office from the "Shujras", and not actually in the fields, a great deal of inaccuracy resulted and many villages had to be re-measured. The assessment was worked on principles exactly the reverse of those that are now observed, the assessing officer working down from aggregate to detail. That is, only the revenue was definitely fixed, malguzars being left to redistribute and enhance rents to meet the revenue increment as might seem best to them, every encouragement and assistance being rendered by the Settlement Department. But as the revenue must ultimately be based on profits, it was necessary to estimate the amount by which malguzars would in practice be able to enhance rents. Captain Ward, therefore, to quote his own words, proceeded to "assume rent rates which would bear a proper proportion to the capabilities of the people and would not entail too great an enhancement of the rents now paid." Half of these rates was taken as the "deduced revenue rate" and the new revenue was then ascertained by the application of this rate to the cultivated area. Captain Ward himself realised how very arbitrary these rates must be, and had to find some sort of check rate. The plough rate, then extensively prevalent in Ramgarh and parts of Mandla, was however too uncertain both in area and value: it was no uncommon thing, says Captain

Ward, to find one cultivator, with one acre of poor soil, and cultivating the poorest crops, paying the same as his neighbour, who had ten acres of land, half of which was perhaps well cultivated with wheat. The plough rate therefore was discarded, but the produce and soil rates were retained as checks. Of these the latter only were really efficient; they were ascertained by a somewhat arbitrary subdivision of the rents of a number of more or less similar holdings amongst the soils composing them and striking an average for each. The revenue assessed on these lines was Rs. 61,842, an increase of 48½ per cent. on the former revenue of Rs. 41,685. The increment was proportionately lighter in Mandla than in Ramgarh, where the plough rate system had operated to keep rents at a low figure and made a very free enhancement possible. Rents were of course very uneven, and in any case must frequently have borne little relation to the rough revenue rates adopted. On the whole however the rent adjustment was fair, nominal rents such as those of the Rathor Telis being raised and those of over-charged peasants being substantially reduced.

Reservation of Wastes.

219. The question of waste land reservation was very carefully dealt with in this Settlement. The chief object in view, says Captain Ward, was to check the very desultory habits of cultivation which prevailed among the Gonds. Where land was to be had freely for the asking, no importance was attached to proprietary rights, and as soon as a malguzar raised his rents to meet an increase in the Government demand, his tenants merely abandoned their holdings and took up land elsewhere. In this way the malguzar was left helpless; he had to give up the village, which became kham Tahsil, and a source of loss and trouble to the Government. After much revision and alteration some 842,000 acres were finally reserved as Government waste; they comprised land of all kinds, hill, forest, grazing lands, culturable and unculturable. Unfortunately the maps were

very hurriedly constructed, and the result was rough and inaccurate, with very little reference to actual and existing facts.

Tenures.

220. Land being plentiful and labourers few the question of tenures was never of much importance in Mandla. The only peculiar tenure was that of the taluqdars of Ramgarh and Shahpura. For over two centuries this family had held the whole of Dindori Tahsil, paying a takoli of one-seventh the income, but in 1857, the Mutiny year, the wife of the Raja Bikaramajit joined the rebels, and by way of punishment the taluq was taken from his family. The tenants, who also rebelled, were made to pay an additional 20 per cent. on the Government Revenue, which sum is annually given to the representative of the ousted family as a pension; it is known as the "haqq parwarish." In return for services rendered during the Mutiny two estates, Ghugri and Singarpur, were given to Indian officers in ordinary malguzari rights. A few ubari and muafi tenures date from the time of the Garha-Mandla dynasty, as for instance those of the Bajpais, the court historians, and the Ojhas or diwans. Dual rights were conferred in the case of eight villages in Mandla and of one village in Dindori Tahsil. Since the Regular Settlement of 1868 some 52 villages in Mandla Tahsil have been alienated for ever free of revenue under the Waste Land Purchase Rules. In 1868 plot-proprietary rights were conferred on sixty persons (malik-makbuzas), all relations of, or connected with, malguzars. As regards the cultivators themselves, as there was no demand for land, little claim was made for any rights of occupancy. Absolute occupancy rights were conferred on 967, and a conditional right of occupancy on 1376 tenants, the area cultivated by each class being 18,404 and 25,594 acres, or 5 and 7 per cent. of the recorded occupied area respectively.

201. The new settlement, coinciding with the commencement of an era of peaceful and uninterrupted development, worked fairly smoothly. On its expiry in the year 1888, as it was impossible to effect a cadastral survey without much loss of revenue to Government, a so-called Summary Settlement was undertaken under the guidance of Khan Bahadur Aulad Hussain. No enhancement of rents was made except in cases where they were obviously understated or far below the general average in pitch. The total enhancement effected under both these heads, mainly the former, was only Rs. 1741. So far as assessment went, operations were confined to the maintenance of existing rents, a valuation of the home farm and an estimate of miscellaneous income. As no cadastral survey could be undertaken, the old Kistwar maps of the Regular Settlement were corrected as well as could be done with the very limited staff of patwaris then existing. As has been shown, the Regular Settlement maps were based on the roughest of chain measurements and eye survey, and the result of correcting them without cadastral survey could of course be only moderately satisfactory. The result of the proceedings was to raise the revenue of Rs. 63,000 to Rs. 1,07,000 or by 70 per cent. The revenue fraction was reduced from 58 to 52 per cent. in Mandla Tahsil and slightly raised in Dindori Tahsil. The majority of the malguzars at once recouped themselves for the increase in revenue by imposing on tenants of all classes enhancements varying from two to even eight annas per acre. But the assessment was undoubtedly lenient and stood well even through the disastrous cycle of years culminating in the famines of 1897 and 1900. The comparatively small sum of Rs. 8000 only had to be suspended or remitted in 1897, and it was not until 1900, after a series of seven bad years, that the substantial amount of Rs. 46,140 had to be suspended and eventually, for the most part, remitted. In 1907-08

The Summary Settlement, 1888.

also a sum of Rs. 66,436 was remitted on account of the kharif failure and short rabi sowings.

The recent Settlement. Cadastral Survey.

222. Four years after the announcement of the Summary Settlement, a cadastral survey of Mandla District was undertaken and completed by 1897, and Mandla was provided for the first time with a set of comparatively accurate maps. Owing to famines and general distress the staff of patwaris, always insufficient, was quite unable to keep pace with the many changes, that annually took place. The maps ceased to be accurate, and in 1902 an officer was appointed to Mandla for the special duty of map correction. The work was hurried and in some parts, such as Raigarh-Bichchea, so very inaccurate, that the attesting officers at the time of Settlement had to do it all over again to the detriment of their legitimate work of attestation. In Dindori Tahsil a regular staff of map-correcting *maladgars* was employed to save the time of the Settlement officials. The cost of the first cadastral survey, that was finished in 1897, amounted to Rs. 34-5-8 per square mile, and that of map-correction in 1902 to Rs. 10-7-1 per square mile; so that excluding the cost of time and trouble spent by the Settlement officers the total cost of the land survey was just short of Rs. 45 per square mile.

Procedure of the Settlement.

223. The Summary Settlement expired in Mandla and Dindori Tahsils in the years 1903 and 1904 respectively. In November 1903 Mr. Bell, I.C.S., was appointed to the District as Settlement Officer, his assistant being Mr. Bapuji. Over 850 crop experiments were carried out; and except in the Raigarh-Bichchea tract (the two plough-rented groups of Ghugri and Chapartala), the revision of the assessment was made on the soil-unit system introduced into the province by Sir Bampfylde Fuller. The details and methods of this system are explained in Chapter IV.

224. In ordinary malguzari villages the enhancements in the payments of malik-makbuzas and the rents of tenants can be seen from the following comparative tables :—

Rental Enhancements.

	Malik-Makbuzas.
	Rs. a. p.
Prior to Revision	1,022 1 3
(per acre)	0 4 4
As announced	2,266 6 0
(per acre)	0 9 5

	Tenants.		
	Absolute-ocupancy.	Occupancy.	Ordinary.
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Prior to Revision ...	7,806 12 9	30,836 1 3	1,94,384 0 0
(per acre)	0 11 0	0 7 8	0 5 0
As announced	10,605 2 0	41,833 12 0	2,26,148 4 0
(per acre)	0 15 1	0 10 5	0 5 10

The total payments of tenants prior to Revision amounted to Rs. 2,33,026-14-0, and as announced Rs. 2,78,587-2-0.

As regards the plot proprietors or malik-makbuzas, the enhancement of 121 per cent. is not really so enormous as it appears. It is due to the calculation of revenue (for purposes of estimating assets only) on holdings held revenue free against the malguzar, generally in lieu of shares in villages;

on these holdings, as the enhancement did not affect the holder, the full deduced rent was taken in every case. The enhancement on revenue paying holdings was only Rs. 456-8-6, or 56 per cent. or Rs. 2-0-2 per holding. The net result of rent enhancement over the whole district was to add a sum of Rs. 45,560 (or 19½ per cent.) to payments of tenants; the average enhancement per head was about Rs. 1-9-0 varying from 0-11-0 in the jungly parts to two or three rupees in the more fertile tracts. This is about one-fiftieth of the net profit of an average holding, and may be considered a lenient assessment.

Home-farm valuation.

225. The home-farm lands amounted to nearly one-tenth of the occupied area, but included considerably more than their share of the best lands. No attempt however was made to assess malguzars on the cultivating profits of their lands, which were valued in the same way and at the same rates as the tenants' holdings, except that no margins were granted on the deduced value otherwise than for improvements. The total valuation of the home-farm area amounted to Rs. 49,684-2-0, that is to say, Rs. 0-10-5 per acre. An area of 5508 acres was at revision leased out to tenants; part of this was more or less accidental, but 2970 acres were sub-let for cash at Rs. 3206-10-7 and the valuation adopted for this area was only Rs. 2840-3-0, or 11 per cent. below the rent actually paid.

Miscellaneous income.

226. The income which malguzars derive from forests, tanks, waste, brick fields and other sources, is known as "miscellaneous" or "*siwai*." The malguzars keep no accounts, but they certainly derive a very large income from the sale of harra, mahua and firewood, especially on the Jubbulpore border. Their income was estimated at the low figure of Rs. 22,960 or 6 pies per acre of jungle and waste, the Government demand being 50 per cent. of this sum.

Figures of assets.

227. A comparison of the gross assets in malguzari villages at the Summary Settlement with those of the new Settlement is given in the following table :—

	Summary Settlement.			New Settlement.		
	Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.
Malik-makbuzas' payments and tenants' rental ...	1,74,103	6	2	2,80,853	8	0
Rental value of sir, khud-kasht and land of privileged tenants	29,851	2	2	55,674	4	0
Siwai	9,597	5	0	22,960	8	0
Total ...	2,13,551	13	4	3,59,490	4	0

Thus the gross assets of the new Settlement exceed those of the Summary Settlement by nearly one-and-a-half lakhs, or 67 per cent.

The Revised Malguzari Revenue.

228. Excluding the ryotwari villages the actual revenue assessed on the whole district was Rs. 1,80,549, the greater part of which falls on Mandla Tahsil. Taking each tahsil separately, the gross assets of Mandla Tahsil, as announced in 1910, were Rs. 2,58,779; the actual revenue payable to Government was Rs. 1,31,509, or approximately 51 per cent. of the gross assets. Of this sum Rs. 1,29,847 is malguzari revenue at 50½ per cent. of malguzari assets. In Dindori Tahsil the gross assets were assessed at Rs. 1,00,710, and the revenue at Rs. 49,040, or 49 per cent. of the latter. Malguzari revenue was Rs. 48,671 at 48½ per cent. of the malguzari assets. The total revised malguzari assessment for the district is Rs. 1,80,549, which is 50·2 per cent. of the revised assets. Government however does not receive the whole of this sum. In Mandla Tahsil there are 52 Waste Land Purchase villages, which are revenue-free in perpetuity. Their value, which is unrealisable by Government in

accordance with the conditions of their sale, is assessed at Rs. 5160. Another Rs. 3438 is lost to Government on account of a few muafi, ubari, and quit-rent grants, dating back in some cases to the old Gond régime. The net realisable revenue therefore is Rs. 1,80,549 less the two sums mentioned above, that is to say, a balance of Rs. 1,71,950. After paying the Government revenue the share of assets left with the malguzars is of the value of Rs. 1,78,941, which is 69 per cent. in excess of the balance of Rs. 1,05,841 left to them at the last Settlement. In actual fact they were at first Rs. 23,000 out of pocket owing to the new Settlement, but the loss has stimulated them to increase the area under cultivation, and many have already recouped themselves.

Figures of incidence and and term of Settlement.

229. Three-quarters of the total area under wheat is composed of the soils known as Kabar II, Mund I, and Mund II in the "ordinary" or the "tagar" positions. The average rental per acre of Kabar II is Rs. 1-1-10, of Mund I Re. 0-14-3, and of Mund II Re. 0-10-8. Rents in Mandla Tahsil are about 52 per cent. higher than in Dindori. The most expensive wheat land is Kabar I soil in the Hirdenagar group, the rent of which averages Rs. 1-15-8 per acre. In this group also the rice soils are most highly rented, Kabar I averaging at Rs. 2-7-7, Kabar II at Rs. 2-1-0, and Mund I at Rs. 1-9-1 per acre. The lightest assessed rice land is the Mund II soil of Ramnagar, where the rent per acre is only Re. 0-12-6. The incidence of rent on the minor cropped lands in Mandla Tahsil varies from Re. 0-2-4 to Re. 0-3-6 per acre, and in Dindori from Re. 0-1-6 to Re. 0-2-3, or between two and three annas for the whole district.

The term of Settlement is fixed for twenty years; in Mandla Tahsil and the Partabgarh group of Dindori the Settlement will fall in on 30th June 1928, and in the rest of the district on 30th June 1929.

Cesses.

230. In addition to the revenue malguzars have to pay cesses and in a few cases the *haqq parwarish*. In the Settlement of 1888 the cesses, which included the additional rate, patwari, postal, road and school cesses, amounted to Rs. 14,500. Since then however the additional rate and the patwari cess have been abolished; the other three are consolidated at $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on revenue (not, as it is often said, on assets). Malik-makbuzas pay at the same rate as malguzars. The total sum thus payable is Rs. 10,000, or only about two-thirds of the amount payable under the Settlement of 1888, and that though the revenue is now 68 per cent. greater than it was at that time. The *haqq parwarish* is the sum granted to Dindori Taluqdars as a compassionate allowance after the family had been deprived of their estates for participation in the Mutiny. The money is paid by the lessees of their villages as a fine for following their masters into rebellion. The allowance was calculated at 20 per cent. of the revenue of the villages concerned, or Rs. 2900 in all. At the Summary Settlement it was raised to Rs. 3577, at which figure it now stands. The money is paid by the malguzars into the Government Treasury in addition to their ordinary revenue, and is drawn by the Taluqdars as pension from Government.

Tenures.

231. Of the total occupied area of the district, which, excluding ryotwari tenures, amounts to 787,000 acres, the sir land of malguzars is 39,866, and the khudkasht 36,696 acres, which together total 76,562, or nearly 10 per cent. of the whole occupied area. Of the rest 3805 acres are recorded as held by malik-makbuzas, 11,319 acres by absolute-occupancy tenants, 64,162 acres by occupancy tenants, 76,219 acres by superior ordinary tenants, and 544,065 acres, or nearly 70 per cent. of the whole by ordinary tenants. The remaining 11,000 acres are held revenue-free or by privileged tenants. The total area leased out by malguzars is 5508 acres.

Ryotwari villages.

232. Mandla is one of the five important ryotwari districts of the Province, the ryotwari estate comprising 576 villages and occupying an area of 795 square miles. The population, though no less than 167 of the villages are uninhabited annexes of malguzari villages, is 47,075. Between the Regular and Summary Settlements ryotwari villages were casually referred to as patch-cultivation and left to the management of the Forest Department. In 1892 however, as the Forest Department's system of fluctuating assessments was unsuccessful, the ryotwari villages were put under the management of the ordinary revenue staff, and assessed on the soil-unit system. Of late years a certain amount of exchange also has taken place, eleven forest villages being declared ryotwari in return for eleven villages that were transferred to the Forest Department for management as forest villages. In 1905 a ryotwari Naib-Tahsildar was appointed, improvements were made, and Government took upon itself the duties of a large and sympathetic landlord.

The first difficulty was to combat the nomadic habits of the aboriginals and reconcile them to a settled home; Government therefore adopted a course of village improvement, and began by providing a good water-supply. Formerly the villagers used to dig holes (*jhiria*) for water, which being used by both men and cattle, and for all purposes, soon became unfit for drinking. Since 1905 sixty wells have been dug in various villages, and 46 wells are now under construction. In Mandla Tahsil ten villages have been provided with tanks for nistar or irrigation. Much money has been spent on gardens, embankments, and the erection of stone "*bands*" which, while allowing free egress to water, prevent the silt from being washed away by the rains, and also tend to level the fields. Altogether some Rs. 25,000 have been expended on land improvement. A network of roads is under contemplation which will connect many of the villages

studded about the southern part of Dindori Tahsil and encourage the export of produce and the immigration of cultivators. One of these roads, that which goes from Dindori to Amarkantak, has already been nearly completed, and the district is now open to easy access from the East. As regards the ryots or tenants, about 75 per cent. are Gonds, the rest being Kols, Pankas, Patharis, and Rathors, with a fair sprinkling of Telis, Mohammadans and Brahmans. The Kols are excellent labourers, but the Rathors are the best cultivators. The rapid progress and development of the ryotwari estate can best be gauged by the following statement which shows the acreage under various crops in the years 1895 and 1909 :—

Year.	Wheat.	Jagni.	Kodo-kutki.	Net-cropped area.
				Acres.
1895-6	2301	5738	56,871	105,243
1909-10	11,893	33,832	83,931	190,511

In these fifteen years the net-cropped area has increased by 85,000 acres or over 80 per cent. The condition of the cultivators has improved with their villages ; and the Gond, who used to boast of one small piece of cotton as his wardrobe, may now be seen with dhotie, coat, turban, umbrella, and sometimes a pony to take him from one village to another.

New Ryotwari Settlement.

233. In assessing the ryotwari villages great care was exercised lest, by making ryotwari rents less than those in malguzari villages, cultivators should be tempted into abandoning their old holdings and migrating to ryotwari villages. A standard all-round enhancement of 16 per cent. was announced, but actually in Mandla Tahsil an average enhancement of 14, and in Dindori of

15 per cent. was finally made. The assets of the home Tahsil estate were fixed at Rs. 21,000, and of Dindori at Rs. 84,000, the occupied areas being about 51,000 and 213,000 acres respectively. The total ryotwari estate of the district is assessed at a little more than Rs. 1,05,000; the total occupied area is 265,129 acres, and the rent rate averages six annas four pies per acre. The highest assessed group is the Bineka estate, where the rent rate is nine annas nine pies per acre, and the lowest Mokas at an average of three annas four pies per acre. Both Bineka and Mokas are in Mandla Tahsil. The rents of survey numbers in Ryotwari villages are paid into the Treasury, in full, but the patel is allowed a drawback of two annas per rupee collected, that is, twelve and a half per cent. in return for his official position as Patel and his trouble in collecting the rents. In particular cases where a Patel has made improvements in his village, or bettered its condition generally, he can draw a special rate of commission, at four annas per rupee, or 25 per cent. When a ryot first takes up land in a ryotwari village, if the soil is "black," he pays no revenue for two years; the first year is called *muafat* or free, the second *muafeksala* or free for one year. If the soil is of any other kind, no concession is given, but rent is levied from the beginning. The reason is that black soil requires a year or two's cultivation before it is cleared of weeds and fit for sowing, whereas light soil can be sown and reaped at once.

CHAPTER IX.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

Acquisition and Administrative Sub-divisions.

234. Just about a hundred years have elapsed since Moodhajee Bhuslah, Rajah of Nagpur, delivered his unprovoked attack on the British Resident at Nagpur, and thereby broke within a few months of its ratification the perpetual defensive alliance concluded between himself and the Honourable East India Company. The war, which followed the rupture of the treaty, resulted in the Rajah being brought to his knees, but he was again reinstated on his throne, in the hope that having learnt his lesson he might acquit himself better in the future. These hopes were not to be realised, as the following extract from an official record will show :—..................

"Whereas in utter forgetfulness of this lenity, and in disregard of every principle of faith and honour, Appah Sahib (Moodhajee Bhuslah) entered into fresh concert with the enemies of the British Government, that Government was consequently compelled to remove him from the Musnud ; and Maharajah Raghojee Bhooslah having succeeded to the same by the favour of the said Government, the following Treaty is concluded between the States ....It is agreed and covenanted that the territories to be assigned and ceded to the Honourable Company by the 5th Article shall be subject to the exclusive management of the said Company and their Officers...........

SCHEDULE

of Cessions to the British Government

1st Mundilla,

including

1. Fort of Mundilla. 2. Burgee."

Under this "Treaty of perpetual friendship and alliance between the Honourable East India Company and His

Highness Maharajah Raghojee Bhooslah, his heirs and successors", Mandla and Bargi, a taluka which now forms part of Jubbulpore District, were formally handed over to the administration of the Company. For seventeen years, that is, from 1818 to 1835, Mandla and the surrounding country was administered as a Tahsil of Seoni, while the Ramgarh and Sohagpur talukas formed Tahsils of Jubbulpore. In 1835 Mandla was made a munisiffi subordinate to Seoni, but in 1851 the three tracts of Mandla, Ramgarh and Sohagpur were amalgamated into the independent district of Mandla, a Tahsildar being stationed at Shahpura. After the mutiny Sohagpur was handed over to Rewah State, the Ramgarh Rajah deposed, and the district transformed into a homogeneous whole. It is now divided into two Tahsils, Mandla and Dindori; each is in the charge of an Extra-Assistant Commissioner, who is also the Sub-divisional Magistrate, and each has a Tahsildar and Naib-Tahsildar. The Tahsils, as at present constituted, are very large and unwieldy, and it is not unlikely that a third Tahsil may be formed with its headquarters at Shahpura. The whole district is in the charge of the Deputy Commissioner, who is District Magistrate. One of the Extra-Assistant Commissioners is Registrar and Treasury Officer in addition to his other duties.

Added to the permanent staff there is at present a third Naib-Tahsildar attached to Dindori, whose special charge is the ryotwari estate of that Tahsil. His time is devoted to the management and improvement of these estates, which in Dindori Tahsil are numerous and of increasing importance. Dindori Tahsil contains 431 and Mandla Tahsil 145 ryotwari villages, and at present the number of malguzari villages in the former is 517 and in the latter 920. Each Tahsil therefore contains about a thousand villages, though those of the home Tahsil are the larger and more prosperous.

The Civil Court staff consists only of one Subordinate Judge, who has Small Cause Court jurisdiction, and is under

the District Judge at Jubbulpore. One of the Executive Assistants is also an additional Subordinate Judge, and the Tahsildar, Mandla, is an Extra Munsiff. The civil duties of these officers are confined to the adjudication of suits between landlord and tenant. Dindori has no Munsiff, but petty civil suits of that Tahsil are decided by the Tahsildar who has been appointed an Extra Munsiff. The District has no Honorary or Bench Magistrates. For the purposes of Forest Administration one of the seven Forest Ranges, that of Dhanwahi in the west of the Mandla Tahsil, is included in the Jubbulpore Forest Division, the Mandla Division consisting of the remaining six Ranges.

Land Record Staff.

235. The district had no regular Land Record staff until the year 1855, and it was not till 1866 that a patwari cess at 6 per cent. on the Land Revenue was definitely fixed and levied from malguzars. This cess used to be collected by Government, and its proceeds placed in a common district fund, from which patwaris received their pay. There were then only thirty-five posts of patwari for the District, of which five were hereditary. The number of villages in the charge of a patwari varied from 5 to 95, and their graded pay ranged between Rs. 72 and Rs. 180 per annum. In 1885 the number of patwaris was raised to 57 and this was further increased in 1891 and again in 1896, when it stood at 145. At the recent Settlement (1905 to 1910) the number has been fixed at 196, of whom 96 belong to the Mandla Tahsil and 100 to Dindori. None of these posts are now hereditary. Consequent on the abolition of the patwari cess with effect from 1st April 1906 patwaris, like other Government servants, are paid from provincial revenues. The supervising staff consists of one Superintendent of Land Records, one Assistant Superintendent and ten Revenue Inspectors. The head-quarters of Revenue Inspectors have lately been changed; they now are Narainganj, Niwari, Mandla, Mohgaon and Bichhea in the home Tahsil, and Shahpura,

Amgawan, Dindori, Samnapur and Bajag in Dindori Tahsil. Each Revenue Inspector has on an average about 20 patwaris to supervise in 200 villages. The average number of villages in a patwari circle is 10. The present pay of patwaris has lately been raised, and instead of the emoluments varying according to the locality, all are paid at the uniform rate of Rs. 10 per month. An additional personal allowance varying from Rs. 10 to Rs. 44 is given to patwaris whose work has been particularly good.

Crime and Litigation.

236. Under the former Government (the Marathas), says Major Wardlow, there do not appear to have been any regular Courts of Justice, either Civil or Criminal. The *Sūbah* of the district and the Tahsildars had authority to decide Civil suits, and the patels of villages also might do so, provided the panchayat was present as a kind of jury. The Judge used to listen to both sides and give a verbal decision ; but justice was frequently sold to the highest bidder, which, coupled with the facts that the successful person had to pay a percentage of his gain to Government and the judgment-debtor a fairly substantial fine, made both sides reluctant to lay their grievance before the public tribunal. Moreover, if any one was possessed of money, he would do his best to conceal it rather than deliberately betray it to the authorities. Disputes, which generally lay between patel and cultivators, were settled privately on the arbitration of some village elder, another patel, or the panchayats. Criminal justice was administered like Civil justice by the *Sūbah* and Tahsildars. The death-sentence was rarely given ; murder was punished with imprisonment, confiscation of property, or fine, and in aggravated cases by cutting off the nose or hand, or branding on the forehead. The ringleaders in a dacoity were put to death, the rest being flogged into confessing where the stolen property had been concealed. As fornication proved to be a very lucrative source of emolument to the authorities, every encouragement was given

to women to disclose the names of those with whom they had gone astray. The uncorroborated word of the woman was taken as absolute proof of the man's guilt, and many large fines were extorted by Government from quite innocent persons. In fact it is said that the Rajah Raghojee of Nagpur made quite a handsome income from this source. He encouraged women of low character to come forward with fictitious accusations against respectable men of his Court ; he would then hint to his victims that their good repute was in jeopardy, and thereby induce them into paying large sums of money to avoid a shameful publicity. Practically no records were ever kept of the criminal convictions during the Maratha rule, but the average annual convictions for the first eight years of the British administration were 8·5 under murder, 3·5 under dacoity, 200 under offences against property, 23 under adultery, 5·5 under bribery, and 65 under assault, defamation and other petty crimes. Gonds were the most frequent offenders, Pardhans and Mussalmans running them a close second. Nowadays the record of crime in the district is very light. During the twelve years ending with 1908 the average number of criminal cases disposed of annually was 604, of which 472 were cognizable by the police. The great bulk of crime consists of offences against property, the figures of house-breaking and theft averaging 177 annually. The record would be much lighter, were it not for the large number of prosecutions under the Excise Act, between the years 1902 and 1905. At that time an attempt was made to stop illicit distillation, which is particularly common in Mandla, where the inhabitants are chiefly aboriginals and *mahua* plentiful ; liberal rewards were given to the Police for detection, and the tale of convictions was lengthy, amounting to as many as 367 in 1904. The attempt was not very successful, and it was also discovered that the Police, encouraged by hope of the rewards, devoted their energies to the discovery of petty

offences against the Excise Law to the neglect of their more legitimate duties. The policy of later years has been to discourage interference by the Police in petty cases under the Excise Act, and in 1908 the number of convictions was 65 only. The bulk of civil litigation is confined to petty suits below Rs. 100 in value. In 1891 the number of suits instituted, including "principal" suits between landlords and tenants, was 1276. but the last few years have seen a gradual increase in litigation; in the year 1907 the number of suits was 2,017. In 1908 there was a considerable fall, but this was probably due to agricultural distress caused by the famine of that year. With the separation of the judicial and executive branches and the advent of the railway an increase in civil litigation will inevitably result.

Registration.

237. The Senior Extra Assistant Commissioner is now District Registrar. Under him are two Registration offices situated at Mandla and Dindori. The former is in charge of a Sub-Registrar, who receives a fixed salary and also a commission of three annas on each document registered, and the latter is in charge of the Tahsildar, who is *ex-officio* Sub-Registrar. The Tahsil Copyist, who works as the Sub-Registrar's Muharrir at Dindori, receives a commission of eight annas on each document registered. The Sadar Registration office and the two sub-offices are sufficient for the requirements of the district. The average number of documents registered annually is between 150 and 200. The classes of documents most commonly registered are "sale deeds" and mortgages of immovable property. The average annual receipts from Registration for the decade ending with the year 1911 were Rs. 987, the maximum being Rs. 1194 in 1907-1908.

Statistics of revenue.

238. The following statement shows the receipts under the principal heads of revenue for the decade ending with 1900-1901 and for the ten subsequent years separately:—

Year.	Land Revenue.	Cesses.	Stamps.	Excise.	Income tax.	Forests.	Registration.	Total.
For the decade.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1891—92 to 1900—01	1,41,282	......	13,921	67,[illegible]61	1,538	82,166	930	3,07,323
1901—02	1,73,382	8,186	14,928	53,903	1,502	97,397	708	3,50,006
1902—03	1,73,737	8,316	14,144	73,561	1,314	8,15,394	727	5,77,103
1903—04	1,78,079	8,209	15,964	90,119	659	1,41,416	789	4,35,280
1904—05	1,79,708	8,174	16,755	1,05,619	596	1,34,594	1,008	4,46,484
1905—06	1,85,386	5,997	16,249	1,05,005	930	1,25,315	902	4,39,784
1906—07	1,85,211	5,997	19,244	1,41,651	1,139	1,44,394	1,049	5,01,685
1907—08	55,538	3,452	22,441	81,955	1,168	54,243	1,164	2,19,991
1908—09	2,44,209	11,592	25,519	1,41,155	1,415	1,22,469	1,193	5,47,552
1909—10	2,66,271	15,151	26,831	1,34,293	1,258	1,27,146	1,180	5,72,120
1910—11	2,65,283	15,168	23,115	1,33,908	1,196	1,27,347	1,126	5,67,143

The cesses of the first period are amalgamated with the Land Revenue. The decrease in 1905-06 and subsequent years is due to the abolition of the patwari cess and of the additional rate. There remain the school, road and Post Office cesses, which are credited to the District Fund. As a result of the Settlement operations just completed the Land Revenue was raised by about Rs. 72,859. The receipts under Excise and Forest show a steady increase, but they as well as the Land Revenue were badly hit by the famine of 1907-08.

Excise.

239. Excise Administration in Mandla is in a stage of transition and the present system is a hybrid one peculiar to the district. Up till the year 1905-06 the ordinary outstill system with circle monopolies was in vogue; by this system the right to manufacture and sell retail in each circle was sold by auction, and importation from one circle to another was forbidden. It is under contemplation to introduce the contract supply system, under which outstills are to be abolished and the retail vendor bound to purchase liquor at a fixed price supplied by Government at central godowns. Liquor for these godowns has to be imported from other districts, and owing to the distance and absence of roads it was manifest that the retail vendor could only obtain such liquor at a cost in excess of the cost price of locally distilled liquor. The result would be a rise in the retail price, and this was considered dangerous in a district where illicit distillation is peculiarly common. In 1906 therefore it was decided to make an experiment; godowns were established and supplied with liquor imported by Government, but it was left to the option of the retail vendor to purchase liquor from the godowns or to distil his own liquor at an outstill. The object was to test whether godown liquor on account of its better quality and strength can compete with locally distilled liquor, and to educate the taste of the aboriginal to prefer the godown liquor even at a higher price to liquor illicitly or otherwise locally distilled. This experiment is

still continuing and there are at present four godowns situated at Bamhni, Pindrai, Dindori, and Shahpura, existing side by side with outstills. One effect of this hybrid system has been to make the retail price more stable, as the contractor is less dependent on the vagaries of the *mahua* crop. Another important modification of the outstill system has been the abolition of monopolies, and the outstill contractor, who is also the retail vendor, can sell to any resident of the district. The result has been a keen competition amongst retail vendors, which has improved the quality and lowered the price of liquor. This combined with a general improvement of the labouring classes and higher wages has done a good deal to lessen illicit distillation. A system of metal discs has been introduced, which has undoubtedly helped to increase the excise revenue. Under this system metal discs are supplied to contractors, who can sell as much as 30 seers of liquor to any person on issuing these to the purchaser, each disc covering 5 seers of liquor. The number of discs supplied to each contractor, which to a great extent regulates his retail sale, is proportionate to the amount which he pays Government for the contract. Although the number of outstills and shops has been reduced from 518 in 1905-1906 to 269 in 1912-1913 the revenue from country liquor has increased from Rs. 63,399 to Rs. 1,33,908, that is, by more than 100 per cent.

The following table shows the number of liquor-shops with their license fees for the year 1909-1910 till the present date :—

Year.	No. of shops.			License fees.
	Under contract supply system.	Under Outstill system.	Total.	Rs.
1909-10 ...	...	308	308	1,01,425
1910-11 ...	21	263	284	95,220
1911-12 ...	44	227	271	93,000
1912-13 ...	44	225	269	1,18,975

Opium and Ganja.

240. In 1905-1906 the district contained 30 opium shops, or one shop to every 168 square miles, and the yield of revenue was Rs. 29,562. In the year 1912-1913 the number of shops has been reduced to 26, but the receipts have risen to Rs. 32,503. The number of *ganja* shops has also been reduced from 49 to 33, or one shop to every 153 square miles; the consumption however does not appear to be on the decrease.

District Fund Committee.

241. Mandla is the only district in the Central Provinces in which there is no District Council with its attendant Local Boards and system of election, constituted under the Local Self-Government Act. The District Fund Committee is a relic of the local committee established in 1863 in all districts of the Province for the administration of Local Funds; these were four in number, *viz*: the District Road Fund, District Ferry Fund, Nazul Fund, and Municipal Fund. With the establishment of a Municipal Committee under the Municipal Act the Municipal Fund has disappeared, but the constitution and duties of the District Fund Committee differ little from those of the local Committees of 1863. The Deputy Commissioner is *ex-officio* President of the Committee, and including him there are 8 *ex-officio* and 15 nominated members. The Committee is assisted by an advisory Sub-Committee at Dindori, which consists of 10 members, 4 official and 6 non-official, with the Tahsildar as President. The average income of the District Fund Committee for the decade ending with the year 1911 was Rs. 42,400, the principal sources of revenue being road cess (Rs. 6500), education cess (Rs. 2900), cattle pounds (Rs. 8600), ferries (Rs. 4100), and contributions from Provincial revenues (Rs. 18,600). The corresponding annual expenditure was Rs. 40,200, the principal heads being education (Rs. 13,100), roads (Rs. 7600), other civil works (Rs. 8000), medical expenses (Rs. 4000), and cattle-pound charges (Rs. 3400). In comparison with the income of the decade ending with the year 1901 this

last decade shows an increase of over 61 per cent., the greatest advance being in the revenue derived from pounds and ferries. The expenditure is chiefly on roads and schools. The total expenditure on roads since the year 1901 amounts to Rs. 76,000; and since the year 1907 nine new primary and three middle schools have been opened, and the pay of masters has been increased with effect from the 1st April 1909. The day is probably not far distant when the district will have sufficiently advanced to justify the application of the Local Self-Government Act and the introduction of the elective system as in other districts.

Municipalities.

242. Mandla is the only Municipal town in the District. In the census of 1911 its population was ascertained to be 9,379 persons. The Municipal Committee consists of 17 members, 5 of whom are as a rule nominated by Government, while the other 12 are elected by the townspeople. Latterly however as no member was returned by the Bazaar Mohalla, Government nominated a sixth member, and the elected members now number 11 only. The average income for the decade ending with the year 1911 was Rs. 12,987; in the first year of the decade it stood at Rs. 8857, since when it has been steadily rising until it reached the figure Rs. 21,064 in 1911-1912. Most of the income is derived from "Tolls on Roads and Ferries," but the opening of the new causeway over the Nerbudda will be a sore blow to one of the ferries. The following table shows the revenue from various sources in the year 1911-1912:—

	Rs.
Tolls on roads and ferries...	7,298
Tax on houses and lands	2,886
Conservancy...	1,655
Rents of lands, houses, Sarais, etc.	1,452
Pounds	1,846
Bazaar tax	610
Miscellaneous	5,317
Total Rs. ...	21,064

Most of the revenue is expended on conservancy arrangements, and on the improvement and maintenance of roads. The town is picturesquely situated on the Nerbudda river in the apex of a triangle made by a sudden bend of that river at its junction with the Banjar tributary. The river, flowing between groves of mango trees on the one bank and the town with the ruins of the old fort and numerous temples on the other, adds much to the attraction, though perhaps not to the health of Mandla. The town is not very sanitary and the system of drainage is antiquated. A drainage scheme is under consideration, but this and other improvements will be a considerable tax on the resources of the Municipality. The village of Maharajpur, which is situated on the opposite bank of the Nerbudda, is now included within Municipal limits. The advent of the railway to this village and the construction of a bridge across the Nerbudda, which has just been completed, will, it is hoped, herald a period of rapid development and progress.

Village Sanitation.

243. The Village Sanitation Act has not been applied to any village in Mandla. Much has been done of late years to improve village sanitation by the construction of wells, and since the commencement of operations under the Sanitary Board in 1891 up to 1904-05 some 51 new wells were constructed and 13 wells repaired. The total cost amounted to Rs. 14,314 of which Rs. 9297 was spent from District Funds, Rs. 1970 from local subscriptions and Rs. 3047 from a Government grant. Between the years 1905 and 1909, a further sum of about Rs. 17,000 has been spent on the conrtruction of 44 new wells.

Public Works.

244. The district has now been made an independent charge under an Executive Engineer, and is divided into two Sub-Divisions, each in charge of a Sub-Divisional

Officer. The following is a list of the principal buildings:—

District Court House.

District Jail.

Post Office.

Tahsil buildings.

Police Office.

Forest Office.

Executive Engineer's Office.

The oldest building in the district is the District Court House, constructed in 1858, at a cost of Rs. 27,117. The district is poorly provided with roads, which are mostly of inferior quality. The Jubbulpore-Mandla road can alone be described as complete. This is bridged throughout, and is provided with rest-houses at Tikaria, Dhanwahi, and Dhobi. There are three other roads radiating from Mandla, the Mandla-Dindori road with a branch to Ramnagar and rest-houses at Manot, Chabi and Sakke, the Mandla-Seoni road with Inspection Huts at Rampur and Nainpur and the Mandla-Bilaspur road with Inspection Huts at Anjania, Thonda, Sijora and Motinala. The Mandla-Bilaspur and Mandla-Seoni roads are now being connected by a branch road from Anjania on the former to Bambni on the latter. Besides these a road runs from Dindori to Birsinghpur station on the Bengal-Nagpur Railway in the Rewah State, and another from Dindori *via* Shahpura to Jubbulpore. These roads are provided with culverts and a few bridges across nallahs. A road from Dindori to Amarkantak has just been completed and, as soon as funds are available, all the eastern parts of the district will be linked together by a series of excellent roadways. A submerged bridge over the Nerbudda river at Kharhar Ghat is under construction and is estimated to cost about one lakh of rupees.

Police.

245. The strength of the Police force in the district is 322 officers and men. The details of the district force are:—1 District Superin-

tendent of Police, 1 Assistant Superintendent, 1 Reserve Inspector, 2 Circle Inspectors, 1 Prosecuting Inspector, 17 Sub-Inspectors, 50 Head Constables, 243 Constables, 3 Sowars and 4 boy orderlies. The Branch Railway running from Nainpur to Mandla, which was for a time under the District Police, has now been taken over by the Government Railway Police, Central Provinces. The whole district contains 8 Station-houses, 19 Outposts, 1 Roadpost and 1 Townpost. This arrangement is being revised, and it is proposed to abolish Outposts and maintain 18 Station-houses. A third Circle Inspector's Circle will also be established with its head-quarters at Shahpura. The Station-house sites will probably be Mandla, Bamhni, Nainpur, Bichchea, Mawai, Ghugri (comprising one Circle Inspector's Circle); Dindori, Shahpur, Sakka, Bajag, Karanjia, Samnapur (comprising a second Inspector's Circle); Shahpura, Mahadwani, Niwas, Mohgaon, Dhanwahi, and Tikaria (comprising the third Inspector's Circle). The annual cost of the Police Force amounts to Rs. 76,535 of which Rs. 60,958 is expended as pay of the Force, Rs. 2484 as pay of clerks, and the rest in contingencies, hospital charges, and other necessary purposes.

Kotwars.

246. The total number of kotwars in the district is 1207, the number of inhabited villages being 1758. The villages in the more hilly and remote parts of the district often consist of a few huts only, and one kotwar is appointed for a group of several such hamlets, while there are a few villages in the more open country, to which more than one kotwar is appointed. The payment of a kotwar's remuneration is divided between the malguzar and the tenants, the malguzar's share being paid in cash or consisting of rent-free land, while the tenants make a grain contribution, which is usually 5 kurus of kharif grain and 2½ kurus of rabi grain per plough. Previous to the new settlement each kotwar had too many villages in his charge to be able to

supervise them efficiently, and he used to appoint sub-kotwars or *bahidars*; their position however was never recognised by Government. In the new settlement 132 new kotwars were appointed out of the ranks of these *bahidars*. The pay of kotwars is fixed at a cash value of Rs. 48, of which the tenants generally subscribe Rs. 36 worth of grain, and the malguzar Rs. 12, less four times the rental value of any land held by the kotwar as a service holding.

Jail.

247. Mandla has a District Jail of the 4th class, which is under the charge of the Civil Surgeon. It has accommodation for 91 prisoners, including a ward for 8 women. The average number of prisoners per diem for the last five years has been 83 in 1907, 75 in 1908 and 1909, 58 in 1910 and 59 in 1911. The average for the decade ending with the year 1911 was 67, the best year being 1910, when the daily average was only 58. The greatest figure of late years was reached in 1900, when famine was rife and offences against property more than usually frequent. The average daily number that year was 104, but since then numbers have been gradually tending downwards, the scarcity of 1908 causing only a very slight increase. In the last decade the total number of literate convicts was 193, or 28 per cent. of the whole; of these a large proportion were Government servants. In 1899 the cost of dieting the prisoners was Rs. 22-6-7 per head. In 1901 this rose to Rs. 37-9-0, and in 1907 fell again to Rs. 21-3-9. Next year owing to the high prices of food-grains it rose to Rs. 33-14-10, but in the year 1911 fell to Rs. 22-14-9. The average cash earnings per head in 1908 amounted to Rs. 15-3-10, but this has declined lately, and in 1911 the average earnings were only Rs. 11-10 per head. The chief industries of the Jail are aloe-pounding and stone-breaking. The garden is in an excellent condition, and the sanitary condition of the Jail is satisfactory.

Education.

248. The following statistics show the progress of education for the last five years (1907—1912). The scholars of the High, Middle and Primary Schools of Mandla town are excluded from these figures :—

1907-08	...	64	schools	with	4819	scholars.
1908-09	...	66	,,	,,	5460	,,
1909-10	...	70	,,	,,	6055	,,
1910-11	...	68	,,	,,	6173	,,
1911-12	...	73	,,	,,	7086	,,

The headquarters of the district contains a High School with 75 and 146 boys in the High and Middle departments respectively. There are seven Vernacular Middle Schools in the district, six of which are managed by the District Fund Committee and one by the Church Missionary Society aided by a Government grant. Three of them used to have training classes, which are now abolished, but others also prepare candidates for the Teachers' Certificate Examination. Primary education is at present represented by 66 schools containing 7488 scholars, which gives an average of 113 per school. All of these schools are in the rural area of the district, excepting two vernacular Primary Branches of the High School at headquarters. At present 57 schools are under the management of the District Fund Committee, and three under that of private bodies aided by small grants. As regards female education, there exist only eight Girls' Schools with 420 scholars. Out of the total of 7488 scholars, the numbers under various stages of instruction in 1912 were as follows :—1303 were in receipt of Secondary, and 6185 of Primary education : some 33 scholars also are learning Sanskrit in the Woodburn Sanskrit School maintained by Chowdhri Jaggannath Parshad of Maharajpur. This school is at headquarters and prepares candidates for the Sanskrit First and Second Examinations of the Calcutta University. The percentage of children under instruction to those of school-going age is 28·00 in the case of boys, and 1·80

in that of girls. In the census of 1911 the percentage of males returned as literate was 4·03 and of females ·16; the percentage of Hindus was 4·31, that of Animists being ·17. Expenditure on education has increased from Rs. 16,657 in 1904-05 to Rs. 43,056 in 1912. Of the latter sum Rs. 28,367 are derived from Provincial revenues, Rs. 8520 from the Municipality, Rs. 843 from fees, and Rs. 4679 from private sources. The District is under the Inspector of Schools, Jubbulpore Circle, and has one Deputy Inspector of Schools. A large number of new schools are to be built out of the grant given by the Government of India in memory of the King-Emperor's visit to India in 1911.

Medical Relief.

249. At present the district contains only seven dispensaries, of which those at Marpha and Patpara are private ventures of the Church Missionary Society, aided by a Government grant, and that at Nainpur is exclusively managed by the Bengal-Nagpur Railway. The other four, two of which are situated at Mandla, one at Dindori, and one at Shahpura, are Local Fund Dispensaries. The income is derived chiefly from a Government grant of Rs. 3503, which includes the wages of the Assistant and Sub-Assistant Surgeons; the District Fund subscribes Rs. 1900, the Municipal Fund Rs. 1000, and private subscriptions Rs. 307. Mandla Main Dispensary has 16 beds for in-patients, Dindori 6, Shahpura 4, Patpara 10, and the Jail and Police Hospital, Mandla, 11. In the year 1911 as many as 311 indoor patients and 28,226 outdoor patients received medical assistance from these five places. The figures for Marpha and Nainpur dispensaries are not known. The number of cases treated in 1912 in the Mandla Main Dispensary was 11,396, and the cost Rs. 3172; in Dindori 4212 cases were treated at a cost of Rs. 1596 and in Shahpura 4271 at a cost of Rs. 1264. Two more dispensaries have been sanctioned at Naraingani and Bajag; the cost of the buildings will be defrayed out of local subscriptions to the King Edward Memorial

Fund, and it is probable that, if funds are still available, a third* dispensary will be built at Bhua-Bichchea, at the junction of the new Samnapur-Bichchea with the Mandla-Bilaspur road. Even when these are all completed, the district will not be sufficiently equipped with dispensaries, so difficult is it for residents in outlying villages to make their way in the rains to places where medical relief can be given them. One midwife is attached to the Mandla Dispensary. Vaccination is compulsory only in Mandla Municipality, but it is carried on with fair success throughout the district, the staff employed consisting of 11 vaccinators and one Assistant Superintendent of Vaccination. The total cost in 1911 was Rs. 1938 and the number of successful primary vaccinations that year was 13,694, an increase of more than 500 on the previous twelve months.

Veterinary Dispensaries.

250. There are two Veterinary Dispensaries in the district, one of which is situated at Mandla, and the other at Dindori. The Mandla Dispensary was established in 1899, and is now maintained by the District Fund. The staff consists of two Veterinary Assistants, one of whom is in charge of the Dispensary and attends to cases within a radius of five miles from headquarters, while the other tours in the district and attends to any report that the police or patwaris may send in about the outbreak of disease. The number of cases treated in 1909 was 1800, next year 2284, and 2765 in 1911, the average per annum being 2283 cases; the cost including establishment amounts to Rs. 2200 yearly. All agricultural cattle are treated free of charge, but for other animals a small fee is charged, either for each case separately or at so much per day, at the option of the owner. The scale of fees is as follows :—

(1) Horses, ponies, etc., 8 annas a case or 1 anna per day.

* The foundation stone of the Bhua Bichchea Dispensary was laid by the Chief Commissioner in January 1913.

(2) Dogs, cats, goats, etc., 2 annas a case or 6 pies per day.

(3) Major operations, Rs. 5.

(4) Minor operations, Re. 1.

(5) Indoor patients, 1 anna per day.

(6) Certificates of soundness, Rs. 3.

(7) Compounding fees, Rs. 5 per year.

A regular Veterinary Dispensary building has been provided at Mandla at a cost of Rs. 2500 from Provincial Funds; it contains several blocks for cattle and other animals. The Dindori Veterinary Dispensary has only one Veterinary Assistant, who has to tour in the Tahsil as well as work at head-quarters.

APPENDIX.

GAZETTEER OF TAHSILS, TOWNS, IMPORTANT VILLAGES, RIVERS AND HILLS.

APPENDIX.

GAZETTEER OF TAHSILS, TOWNS, IMPORTANT VILLAGES, RIVERS AND HILLS.

Baiga Chak.—The Baiga Chak, or Reservation, is a tract of nearly 24,000 acres on the eastern border of Dindori Tahsil, now containing four villages, Rujhnisarai, Dhaba, Ajgar, and Silpuri. Previous to the year 1890 the Baigas had practised their ruinously wasteful system of *bewar* cultivation wherever fancy led them, but in 1890 the Baiga Reservation was specially set aside for their use. Outside its limits *bewar* cultivation was strictly prohibited, and such of the 450 Baiga families who refused to enter the Reservation had to migrate to the Pandaria Zamindari of Bilaspur, where indiscriminate *bewar* was allowed. In the Chak only 10,000 acres are available for *bewar* cultivation, and in 1915 this will all have been used up. Government Revenue is assessed at the rate of Rs. 2 per axe used for *bewar*. There still remain some 71 families of Baigas (about 200 persons), who refuse to abandon their old style of cultivation in spite of the many inducements offered by Government to that end. The forests of the Baiga Chak are altogether barren of game, both large and small, everything having succumbed to the Baiga's axe or poisoned arrow.

Bajag.—Bajag is a fair-sized village in Dindori Tahsil, with an area of 392 acres and a population of 492 in 1911, an increase of 150 over that of 1901. The village contains a Police Station and Primary school, and is soon about to have a Dispensary. It lies in a fertile patch of black-cotton soil, surrounded by a number of ryotwari villages. The cultivators are for the most part Rathor Telis, the best agriculturists in the district; the produce of the fields goes by pack-bullock to Garela (Pendra Road) Railway Station. The neighbouring hills are well covered with forests, but game is scarce except for sambhur and tiger.

Bhimkhundi.—Bhimkhundi is a small village in the extreme east of Dindori containing only 128 inhabitants, though the area is 704 acres. Its chief claim to fame is based on the fact that the God Bhim here bestrode the Nerbudda, and left the marks of his feet on the rocks on either side. Two round holes in the rock, about eighteen inches in diameter and depth, are supposed to be the footprints of the god, and pilgrims come from far and wide to bathe in the river near them.

Bichchea.—Bichchea lies at a distance of 26 miles from Mandla along the Bilaspur Road. It is a ryotwari village of 1822 acres and had a population of 101 in 1901, and of 272 in 1911. Though small at present it is a rising place. The new Samnapur road will join the Mandla Road at this spot, and there is also a Police Station, a school and a cattle-pound in the village. In a year or two a new dispensary will be built, the cost being defrayed out of local subscriptions to the King Edward Memorial Fund. The village also contains an outstill.

Bijori.—Bijori is a small village close to Amgaon and Niwas in Dindori Tahsil. As a village it has no particular merit, but in the rains a number of beads of different form, size, and colour are found in the fields, ready bored for necklaces. The number seems to be unlimited; the beads are known as Sulaimandana, or the rosary of Solomon, and are very highly prized by both Hindus and Mussalmans. Their origin is unknown.

Chabi.—Chabi is situated on the Mandla-Dindori road about 34 miles from Mandla. The area is 245 acres and the population in 1911 was 254. It contains an inspection bungalow and lies close to Mahadwani shooting-block, which has a fair reputation for shikar. There is no lack of tiger in the neighbourhood.

Chiraidongri.—Chiraidongri is a village of 732 acres and a population of about 250 persons, lying close to Chiraidongri Station on the Mandla-Nainpur railway line.

North of the village is a small circular hillock, from the caverns of which a current of air is continually expelled. In ancient times the current was so strong, that it used to blow away the houses of the villagers, but a Baiga offered an oblation of buffalo flesh to the local deity and nailed an iron plate over the opening in the hill ; since that time the strength of the gusts has been much less, and the place is now habitable. In spite of this however the village is small, and the railway line has brought practically no trade to the villagers. It is the nearest station to the Banjar Reserve, with which it is connected by a cart-track passable for tongas.

Deogaon.—Deogaon, a village with an area of 1200 acres and a population of about 350 inhabitants, is situated at the confluence of the Burhner river with the Nerbudda. It is of some archæological interest, as it contains an ancient temple of Jamdagneshwar Mahadeo, said to have been built after the death of the Rajah Nizam Shah. The Rajah had offended the deities by murdering his brother and was ordered to sacrifice himself as a punishment. He shut himself up in a hollow pipar tree at this spot and had it set alight, himself perishing in the flames.

Dindori Tahsil.—Dindori is the smaller of the two Tahsils, into which the district is subdivided. The area is 2424 square miles, of which 893 miles are included in Government Forest. The eastern part of the Tahsil is a broken treeless plain of black soil, cultivated by semi-Hinduised Gonds, with a sprinkling of immigrant Mohammadans and Hindus. From this plain which is not nearly so fully cultivated as the fertility of the soil would warrant, a few narrow valleys of good black soil run south along tributaries of the Nerbudda into the deep Sal forests, which separate the district from Bilaspur. In the heart of this wild country is the Baiga Chak, where regulated *bewar* or *axe* cultivation is allowed on a limited scale. As the

Natural Features.

Nerbudda runs west, the soil changes to undulating barra or red murram with small pockets of black soil, in which the industrious Rathor Telis raise a good wheat crop. The Kharmer valley is of a similarly rich character, but further west every kind of soil may be met, from the high-lying Mahadwani plateau to the embanked black-soil fields of the Lodhis round Niwas. In all these parts the Gonds predominate as tenants, though their villages have passed into the possession of others. The principal crops are wheat on the small expanses of black-soil, and hill millets and oilseeds on the red. Shahpura is the only large village with a population of 2682; Ramgarh, which was formerly the seat of a Rajah and a place of interest, has now fallen into ruins; and Dindori village derives its importance solely from the fact that it is the present headquarters of the Tahsil.

Population.

The Tahsil contains 948 villages, of which 517 are malguzári and 431 ryotwari. In the census of 1891 the population was shown as 145,413, in 1901 as 139,629, and in 1911 as 183,065. The decrease between 1891 and 1901 was very nearly 4 per cent., but since 1901 the population has risen by 31 per cent. The density per square mile is 75·5, or, excluding the area covered by Government Forest, 119·5; the average density is much less than that of Mandla Tahsil, but like Mandla it varies very considerably according to the locality. The greatest density is in the east, where it reaches 133 per square mile, while the lowest (68 per square mile) is found in the rugged Mahadwani tract.

Agriculture.

Dealing with malguzari villages first, the total occupied area in 1910 was 363,000 acres, and the unoccupied 595,000 acres. Of the occupied area 41,000 acres were held by malguzars, 4000 by absolute-occupancy, 24,000 by occupancy, and 245,000 by ordinary tenants, the rest being divided up among malik-makbuzas and privileged tenants of various

kinds. In 1910 the total cropped area was 216,649 acres, the principal crops grown being wheat, rice, and kodon-kutki. A comparative table showing the cultivation at the time of the Summary Settlement of 1888 is herewith given :—

	Wheat.	Rice.	Kodon-kutki.	Jagni.	Others.	Total.
1888	40,547	19,308	62,867	8907	38,139	169,768
1910	29,520	20,415	89,070	24,838	52,806	216,649

The revenue derived from malguzari villages, including that assessed on the siwai, is just over Rs. 49,000 per annum.

In the case of ryotwari villages the occupied area is 198,445 and the unoccupied 112,176 acres. The area cropped (including 3400 acres double cropped) in 1910 was 143,319 acres, of which 13,000 were under rice, 13,000 under wheat, 67,000 under kodon-kutki, 17,000 under jagni, and 10,000 under til. The rent paid by the ryots is a little more than Rs. 84,000 or practically four times that paid in Mandla Tahsil. About Rs. 10,000 is returned to the patels or mukaddams in payment for their services as such. The Tahsil is divided into five Revenue Inspectors Circles, Shahpura, Niwas, Shahpur, Samnapur and Bajag.

Dindori Village.—Dindori village is situated on the River Nerbudda, 64 miles from Mandla. It has an area of 2000 acres, and the population, which in 1901 was 945, has now risen to 1299. Of little importance itself, the village has profited by being made the headquarters of the Tahsil. Government has acquired some 400 or 500 acres as a site for building the Government settlement, which lies at a little distance from the rest of the village. The village has a Middle School, with six ordinary classes and a training class for masters. Dindori

also contains a dak-bungalow, a police-station, a post-office, and a public garden which is used as a nursery; in it are grown young trees, which will eventually be planted out as groves in various parts of the Tahsil. The village is now increasing in importance; nazul land has been assessed, and plots are being leased out on thirty-year leases. The principal trade of the place is harra and grain (wheat and oil-seeds), which are exported to Birsinghpur in Rewah State, to be there entrained and despatched to Katni and Jubbulpore. The road between Mandla and Dindori is now being improved, and as soon as all the nallahs are provided with causeways, and cart traffic is made possible, the Dindori trade may very likely come by this route. Dindori has also a Dispensary and Hospital with two rooms for indoor patients. In 1911 the number of patients treated was 4212, of whom 76 received indoor treatment, the total cost being Rs. 1500. A Veterinary Dispensary has lately been built, the staff consisting of one Veterinary Assistant, whose duty it is to look after the work at headquarters as well as tour through the Tahsil.

Ghugri.—Ghugri is a prosperous village on the pack-bullock track between Ramgarh and Mandla. The area is 1112 acres, and the population, which in 1901 was 888, has now risen to 1049. The village lies on the Burhner River, and contains an outpost, a school and a cattle-pound. On Friday is held a weekly market. Grain and cloth are sold, and it is from here that most of the villages in the north-east of Mandla Tahsil are supplied with articles of consumption. It is the headquarters of the "Chaurasi," the estate of 84 villages owned by Ramlal Jamadar, who is one of the largest landlords of the district.

Gour.—The river Gour is a tributary of the Nerbudda, which rises near Niwas in Dindori Tahsil and flows into the Nerbudda close to Barela in Jubbulpore District. The river has a very winding course, piercing the hills that divide Mandla from Jubbulpore, and forming for about twenty



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

A RELIGIOUS MENDICANT.

miles the boundary between the two districts. In accordance with the custom of the country the river has been invested with a certain sanctity. A holy man named Kamta Parshad used to visit one particular spot, where the river has worn out some little caverns in the rock. These are like a succession of rooms opening out from one another, and offer a perfect asylum to a recluse. The depth of the water near this place is stated to be such that if the string used in the construction of a bed were to be sunk as a plummet line it would not reach the bottom.

Hirdenagar.—Hirdenagar lies about five miles away from Mandla on the right bank of the Banjar river and close to the Seoni road. The area of the village is 1400 acres, and the population 2280. The village contains a forest post, a boys' and girls' school and a cattle-pound, but its chief importance is derived from the very flourishing betel-vine gardens which it possesses. The Pansaris who own the vine gardens are a prosperous caste, and their vines enjoy a great reputation throughout the Province. An annual fair, said to have been originated by Rajah Hirde Shah, who settled the village, is held in the month preceding the "Holi" festival. Four or five thousand persons attend the fair, and traders from Jubbulpore and Mandla set up booths in the neighbourhood. During the last few years an Agricultural show has also been held on this occasion, and exhibits are made by many of the local landowners. The village is increasing so rapidly that the mukaddam rules have had to be introduced in the cause of sanitation. The annual assessment comes to about Rs. 150, out of which two sweepers are employed.

Kabir-Chabutra.—Kabir-Chabutra lies in the extreme east of Dindori Tahsil, and marks the exact spot where Mandla district, Bilaspur and Rewah State come into contact. The place is regarded by the Pankas as a kind of Mecca; for there the sage Kabirdas, the originator of the Kabirpanth lived for many years and meditated.

Kakarramath.—Kakarramath is a village nine miles south of Dindori with an area of 1196 acres and a population of over 400. The importance of the place is derived from a very old temple built in honour of Mahadeo. It is popularly supposed that every night a cobra with red eyes circles the Mahadeo and spreads his hood over the head of the image. The generally accepted story in connection with the temple is as follows :—A certain Banjara, who owned a much-prized dog, was once compelled to pawn it with a Bania. A little while afterwards when the Bania was asleep, some thieves broke into his house, stole his money, and hid it in a pond. Next morning the dog led the Bania to the pond and dived into the water, and the Bania seeing the marks of many footsteps round the place also dived in and thereby recovered all his property. In gratitude to the dog he sent it back to its master with a note explaining the reason for his action tied round its neck. The Banjara, seeing the dog arrive, thought that it had escaped from the Bania and made him break his pledge. He therefore clubbed the dog to death, only to catch sight of the note when the dog was dead. He read the note and was so overcome with grief at his own cruelty that he renounced the world and spent the rest of his life building the temple, that now stands at Kakarramath, over the body of his dog. Archæological experts have pronounced the building to be a Jain temple erected between the ninth and thirteenth centuries.

Kanha-Kisli.—Kanha is 28 and Kisli 23 miles from Chiraidongri Railway Station in the Banjar Forest Range. This Range covers an area of 225 square miles, and is well stocked with game of all kinds. Kisli is the headquarters of the Range Officer. The fame of Kanha as a shooting-ground was widespread even in mediæval times, and a story is told in the Hindu epics about the tank that lies within a mile of this place. When a certain Shrawan was filling a pitcher with water from the tank, Rama's father, the Rajah Dasrath, who was shooting in the neighbourhood, mistook the sound

for that of an animal drinking, and loosed an arrow in its direction. The shaft pierced Shrawan's heart; hence the tank is called Shrawantalao and the place, from which Dasrath fired, Dasrathmachān. Both Kanha and Kisli have a rest-house which can be used by visitors. At neither place however can *rasad* be obtained, as Kisli has only a very few inhabitants and Kanha none at all. Baiga shikaris can be found at Bilwani or Chilpara, about ten miles north of Kanha. In the cold weather barasinga lie up in most of the maidans, if they have not been disturbed, particularly in the great maidan east of Kanha and the neighbourhood of the Shrawantalao. The best spots perhaps are Kopedabra and Sob, where sambhur, barasinga and chithal stay out till comparatively late in the day. The Surwahi river is a regular high road of tigers, though it is very hard to get them to kill; or, if they kill, they very seldom return. Bison are not easy to find until the hot weather has set in.

Kapildhara.—Kapildhara is a waterfall of great celebrity on the Nerbudda River, about two and a half miles north-west of Kabir-Chabutra on the Mandla-Rewah border. The fall is some 60 feet in height down the sheer face of a basalt rock, and a peculiar sanctity attaches to the spray caused by the drop. It is named after Kapil Muni, a Hindu saint, who is said to have passed his life here and two footprints, nearly a cubit in length on the bed rock of the river, show where the saint stood when he tried to stop the current of the Nerbudda. In the neighbourhood some monasteries have been built, which are inhabited by Hindu "Yogis", who reside there permanently.

Khairi.—Khairi is a fair-sized village lying within a mile and a half of Mandla. The area is 1139 acres, and the population in 1911 was 569. Ten years previously the population was 421, and twenty years ago only 321. The village possesses one of the few tanks in the district, where an occasional snipe is to be found. It also has a number of pān-gardens from which the village derives a very substantial

income. The tank is famous owing to a habit it once possessed of providing cooking pots for any traveller, who might happen to go that way. The pots used to appear suddenly floating on the surface of the water, and it was a point of etiquette to return the pots to the tank after making use of them. About 150 years ago however an ill-mannered traveller, after satisfying his wants, took the pots on with him instead of returning them to the donor. He had not gone far when his brain suddenly began to whirl, and he felt an irresistible impulse to rush back to the tank. When he arrived he flung himself and the cooking-pots into the water, since when no more pots have ever appeared on the tank.

Lakhanpur.—Lakhanpur is a village with an area of 292 acres. The population is exceptionally large for its size, numbering as many as 631 persons in 1911. It is situated in the extreme north-west corner of the district, in a fairly fertile tract, the progress of which has up till now been retarded by the absence of any road linking it with Jubbulpore. At present the produce has to be taken by pack bullocks to the Mandla-Jubbulpore road. The firm of Seth Jiwandass of Jubbulpore has an agency here, and a weekly market is held, good country blankets being made in the village and sold in fair quantities. It is proposed to make a road from Lakhanpur to join the Mandla-Jubbulpore road at the Gour river crossing, and the opening of postal communication with Bargi Railway Station, nine miles away, is also under contemplation. The village possesses a school and cattle-pound, and when its means of communication are improved, it will become a thriving place.

Madhpuri.—Madhpuri lies within a few miles of Mandla on the south side of the Nerbudda. The area of the village is 737 acres, and the population 681. It contains a school and an outstill, and every year a fair of some importance is held in the neighbourhood, beginning about the end of November. The village is named after a Rajah Madhukar Shah, who founded and brought men to inhabit it. On the

bank of the Nerbudda is a shrine of Mahadeo called Markandeshwar, which leans towards the west, from which peculiarity it is rightly supposed to be of some antiquity.

Mahanaddi.—The lesser Mahanaddi, which must not be confused with the greater Mahanaddi of the south, rises in the heart of the wild and rugged country south-west of Shahpura, flowing within a few hundred yards of the Silgi. They soon part company and eventually the waters of these two streams reach the sea nearly a thousand miles apart. The Mahanaddi quickly leaves the district, after forming its northern boundary for a few miles, and finally flows into the Son and Ganges.

Maikal Hills.—The Maikal Range forms the backbone of Dindori Tahsil. The name is apparently derived from a certain Maikal Rishi, who did penance in its forest-clad ravines; many other sages also, such as Vyasa, Brighu, and Agastya, spent long years meditating in its lonely fastnesses. The range begins at Amarkantak in the east, and runs in a south-westerly direction; towards the north the slopes are gradual, but on the south the mountains fall away abruptly, leaving a magnificent view over the foothills of the Lormi jungle and the plains of Chhattisgarh. At Amarkantak rise the Nerbudda, which empties its water into the Arabian seas, and the greater Mahanaddi, which flows through Southern India into the Bay of Bengal. The highest point of the Range is Damgar, which rises to a height of 3614 feet; all the hill-sides are covered with luxuriant Sâl forests, from the depths of which rise four great tributaries of the Nerbudda, the Seoni, Chikrar, Kharmer, and Burhner. Among the forests on its slopes are numbered that of Bajag, the Baiga Chak, Motinala and the Phen Reserves. At Amarkantak in the east the forests are well supplied with game. Barasinga are not infrequent, and occasionally bison stray over the border from the denser jungles of Balaghat and Kawardha State. The Bajag forests are poorly off for game, and a little further west, the Baiga Chak enjoys an evil notoriety

as being devoid of almost all animal life. Motinala jungles were once the haunt of the buffalo, and even now are a happy hunting ground for bison, tiger, bear and all sorts of game. The Phen Reserves also are full of deer, but bison are not quite so plentiful. Near Motinala the range passes out of the district, the main ridge turning due south and forming the boundary being Kawardha State and Balaghat.

Mandla Tahsil.—Mandla Tahsil lies between Latitude 22°12′ and 23°9′-N and Longitude 79°58′ and 81°12′-E. It covers an area of 2,665 square miles, of which 1,038 square miles are under Government Forest; the actual occupied area is only about 700 square miles. Of the Government Forest 164 square miles, known as the Dhanwahi Range, is included in the Jubbulpore Forest Division. The four Ranges in Mandla Division and Tahsil, namely, Mandla, Jagmandal, Banjar and Motinala have an area of 277, 148, 225 and 224 square miles respectively. The character of the Tahsil is one of the most diversified in the Province. About 200 square miles have a soil as rich as can be found anywhere in Central India, particularly the rice and wheat country between the Jagmandal Range, 12 miles east of Mandla, and the western boundary. The railway line between Chiraidongri and Nainpur passes through a continuous wheat plain from two to six miles broad and twelve miles long; while north of this is a narrow strip of wheat and minor cropped country with low-lying pockets of black soil, cultivated mainly by Gonds of settled habits. North of Mandla itself lies the rugged and inaccessible Mokas tract, a tumbled mass of mountain and ravine, with a fringe of good villages along the Nerbudda and a small plain of rich embanked wheat land around Narainganj. The greater part of this tract can be sown only with the minor kharif crops. In the south-east lies the Raigarh-Bichchea tract, an expanse of rolling plains of grass-land, very sparsely cultivated but teeming with cattle. The population in these parts is almost

Natural Features.

entirely aboriginal and the cultivation is confined to the light millets and unembanked catch rice.

Population.

The total number of villages is 1,065, of which 920 are malguzari and 145 ryotwari. There is only one town, Mandla, the population of which numbers 9379 persons. A large proportion of the inhabitants live in Maharajpur, a prosperous village on the west bank of the Nerbudda, which has lately been included within the Municipal limits. Both places are now connected by a causeway nearly half a mile in length, which crosses the river just below the Kacheri Ghat. The population of the whole Tahsil in 1891 was 193,928, in 1901 was 178,752, and in the 1911 census as many as 222,169, an increase of 25 per cent. in the last ten years. The average density of population is therefore 83·3 per square mile (or, if the area under Government Forest be excluded, 136 per square mile). The density however varies very considerably according to the locality; in the closely cultivated country round Mandla it is as much as 211, and in the Raigarh Bichchea tract as few as 62.

Agriculture.

Taking the malguzari villages first, the total occupied area in 1910 amounted to 424,000 acres, the unoccupied area to 504,000 acres. The distribution of the total occupied area among the various classes of cultivators is as follows: nearly 35,000 acres were held by malguzars, 7000 by absolute occupancy, 39,000 by occupancy, and 298,000 by ordinary tenants. The total cropped area in 1910 was 342,968 acres.

The following table shows the areas under the different crops compared with those of 1888:—

	Wheat.	Rice.	Kodon Kutki.	Til.	Gram.	Others.	Total.
1888...	73,331	54,194	98,188	5265	16,518	56,937	304,433
1910...	59,038	59,658	112,596	10,253	23,307	78,116	342,968

Rents paid by tenants amount to Rs. 2,02,118 and the Land Revenue paid by malguzars to Government, including that assessed on the siwai income is Rs. 1,31,509. The rich rice lands round Hirdenagar pay a rental of Rs. 2-1-0 an acre, the gross value of an acre's outturn being Rs. 26-2-5. The rental is therefore one thirteenth, and Government revenue approximately one twenty-sixth of the gross outturn. In the case of other soils the rental falls at a slightly lower percentage of the gross outturn.

The ryotwari estate of this Tahsil is comparatively unimportant, the total area being only 115,000 acres, of which 35,600 are occupied and 47,500 unoccupied, the rest being useless for cultivation. The total cropped area in 1910 was 26,600 acres; that under wheat was 1600, under rice 4,000, Kodon-Kutki 13,600, gram 1500, and til 1,300 acres. The rents paid by the ryots amounted to Rs. 21,196, or exactly quarter as much as that paid by the Dindori ryotwari estates. The Tahsil is divided into five Revenue Inspectors' Circles, of which the names are Narainganj, Jamgaon, Ramnagar, Chabi and Bichchhea.

Mandla Town.—Mandla is the only town in the district; its area is 597 acres, and the population according to the census of 1911 is now 9379 persons, or 78 per cent. higher than it was ten years ago. The town is a Municipality, the Municipal Committee consisting of fifteen members, of whom five are nominated by Government. The income, which is derived principally from tolls on roads and ferries, in 1911-12 amounted to Rs. 21,000, and was spent chiefly in conservancy arrangements and the improvement of the roads. The town has for many years been a trading centre of some importance. Its prosperity dates from some 250 years ago, when Hirde Shah transferred the seat of Government from Garha to Ramnagar. The magnificent natural defences of Mandla itself attracted the eye of the Rajah's grandson, Narind Shah, who on coming to the throne took up his residence in the Fort. It was occupied for a while by the



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

FATEH DARWAZA, MANDLA.

Marathas, but in 1818 the garrison surrendered to General Marshall, and the Fort has since that date fallen into ruins. The site is now grazed over by cattle and goats, and much of the stone work has been removed by the townspeople as material for house building. This desecration has lately been forbidden, and one can still see a few fragments of the ramparts and towers, which once withstood the shock of Scindia and Pindaric invasion. In the Mutiny Mandla was at one time evacuated, but the rebels never entered the town, although encamped at its outskirts. The town possesses a fine High and Middle School supported largely by the generosity of Rai Bahadur Jaggannath Parshad Chowdhry, who also contributes to the upkeep of a Patshala for Sanskrit instruction. A hospital and dispensary have been built, with sixteen beds for indoor patients; in 1910 as many as 16,260 persons were treated in the dispensary and in the following year 11,396, of whom 96 were taken as indoor patients. The cost of maintenance in 1910 was Rs. 3627, and in 1911 Rs. 3172, of which Rs. 240 was raised by private subscription in the town. Hospitals are attached to the gaol and police lines, with eleven beds; in 1911 just over 1500 persons received medical assistance from these sources. A veterinary dispensary with two assistants is supported by Government. The town has a gaol, a circuit house, dak-bungalow, and Post and Telegraph Office. The chief industry of the place is the manufacture of bell-metal vessels and ornaments, by a caste known as Bharawalas, but owing to competition from outside sources the industry is not prospering. Of late years the Bharawalas have formed a co-operative credit society with a view to improving their financial position. The opening of the railway between Mandla and Nainpur has really done more harm than good to this town, because Bamhni, a station about 10 miles from Mandla, is drawing Mandla's trade to itself. However, in the year ending with July 1912 the exports from Mandla

railway station were 50,000 maunds of wheat, nearly 8000 of mustard, nearly 7000 of til, 2700 of gram and 3000 of jagni. Two fairs are held in the neighbourhood of the town, at Sahasradhara and Purwa; they are more religious than commercial, as the Nerbudda is of great sanctity in these parts. Mandla is connected with Jubbulpore by a first class road, and a causeway has now been made across the river at a cost of one and a half lakhs connecting the town with Maharajpur and Garha-Mandla railway station. Other roads leading from the town are metalled for two or three miles of their length only, though the road to Seoni has an excellent surface as far as Bamhni. Communications are very bad in the rains, when the rivers are swollen. In 1892 a terrific and almost unprecedented flood occurred on the Nerbudda. The houses in Churawanghat, Mehtar Mohulla, Ranjranjghat, Nerbuddaganj, and Urdughat formed a group of islands, cut off from the higher parts of the town. In the Churamanghat the water was flowing 15 feet deep through the streets and 150 persons were rescued from drowning. The ditch that runs by the Dispensary and High School soon became a raging torrent; the Sub-Inspector's hut and the bridge near the junction of the Jubbulpore and Dindori roads were totally washed away, and the Tahsil building was surrounded by water on every side. The losses caused by the flood included 37 houses that were washed away, 76 that fell down, and 33 that were partially damaged, the total value being Rs. 22,000. Most of the sufferers were of the lowest classes, who could ill afford the loss. Wood was given at half rates from Government Forest to enable the homeless to rebuild their houses. So great and sudden was the flood that Duba, a village in Dindori Tahsil, was washed away with all its inhabitants.

Antiquarian Remains.

Mandla is full of relics of her days of greatness. Between Hanumanghat and Churawanghat is a place known as Mahent Baça, erected by Nizam Shah in memory of a holy man, named Pir

Sahib, who came to Mandla from the Emperor Akbar's Court. The Rajah, seeing a vision of Pir Sahib in a dream, ran down to the river Nerbudda, where he found the saint lying asleep on the surface of the water, wrapped in a white cloth. On his request the saint came out of the river and took up his abode at the place now known as Mahent Bada. There is also a temple of Kali Devi, which contains a finely carved image of the deity, brought probably from Ramnagar fort. The builder of the temple, Dhanda Panda, sacrificed himself as an offering to Kali in this place, but came to life again nine days afterwards. At the Vaidya ghat a *tapatkand* or hot spring is said to have existed, the water of which was hot enough to boil rice, but it has since disappeared owing to alluvial deposits. Again between Rambag and Piparpani, within a mile or two of the town, a *tita* or elevation can be seen in the Nerbudda, which is said to have been the *Ashram* or abode of a certain Piplyia Muni. The story goes that a Brahman girl, left desolate in the world, came to the Nerbudda, where a distant relative of hers was doing penance, and began to live with him. One day she took his clothes to wash in the Nerbudda and having washed them put them on while she was washing her own. On returning she found herself pregnant, and in course of time was delivered of a son. The boy immediately asked his mother the name of his father, which she was ashamed to divulge; whereupon he rose up in wrath and transformed himself into a giant reaching to the sky. But Brahma held back his hand and bade him ask the Nerbudda to give him some place, where he might do penance for his anger. Full of fear he besought the goddess Nerbudda, and was shown the *tita*, on which he devoted himself to a life of prayer and fasting; the *tita* still remains as evidence of the truth of this story, and is known as the Piple-deshwar after the name of Piplyia Muni. In Mandla town a small temple has been built in honour of the goddess Singhwahin, in the house of Gudoo Dhimar Panda. The temple contains an image, but no one knows from where it

came. In olden times the Pandas used to offer their tongues as a sacrifice to the goddess, and after a short while the tissues would join together again, just the same as before. But, as the chronicler naively remarks, this is not the practice now. The local Panda is content in these days to sacrifice two or three drops of blood from his wrist, which he is supposed to manage without feeling the least twinge of pain. In Purwa on the bank of the Nerbudda at its junction with the Banjar stands an ancient image of Mahadeo half buried in the ground. A few years ago one Parmanand Brahmchari, who kept a great herd of she-buffaloes, used to pour daily on the image 120 pounds of milk, which disappeared inside the image, no single drop being wasted. If at any time the milk was not all absorbed, and some was spilt, he would say that Mahadeo was displeased, and would sit on the spot for three days and nights in silent meditation. On the fourth day he would again begin to pour milk, which would disappear as usual. Since his death two or three years ago the custom has dropped out of use. At Chakratirath, which is just below Khararghat on the Nerbudda and close to the Police Shooting-range, a small fair is held annually on the first Sunday after Diwali, and many persons, both male and female, bathe in the river near the place. The name Chakratirath is said to have been derived from the following incident. Once the great god Vishnu killed a Rakshas or evil spirit with his *shudarshan chakra* (a round-bladed weapon) and found a stain of blood upon it. Finding it hard to cleanse, the god ordered the chakra to wash its own stain off in the Nerbudda. This task it accomplished, and the place where it cleansed itself has been known as Chakratirath to this day. In the Fort at Mandla there stands a temple, about which a curious legend is told. The goddess Raj Rajeshwari appeared before the Rajah Nizam Shah in a dream, bidding him fetch her image from Ragadhar Hill (between Mandla and Chhattisgarh), and



Bemrose, Collo., Derby.

TEMPLE ON THE NERBUDDA, ABOVE NANAGHAT, MANDLA.

build a temple for her in the fort. Accordingly he set out to find the image, and, the search being successful, brought it back and enshrined it in a small temple within a larger building. All succeeding Rajahs used to worship the image, especially on the eve of a campaign, when they used to lay their swords by their sides; if victory was to be to them, the sword would slowly rise on its hilt of its own accord. When the Saugor Marathas attacked Mandla, the Rajah went as usual to the temple and laid his sword by his side, praying that, if he was to achieve victory, the sword should not only rise on its hilt, but also leap into his hand. The sword rose as usual, but fell back again without falling into the Rajah's hand. Three times he prayed, and thrice the sword fell back, until the Rajah was convinced of his defeat and to avoid witnessing his ruin, stole out of the fort in a boat before the arrival of the enemy. The present temple, that contains the image, was built about fifty years ago, some say by Rajah Gokaldass, others by Parmanand Chowdhry.

Mangarh Ghat.—Mangarh Ghat is one of the many dangerous passes on the broken track leading from Bajag to Samnapur. It bears an evil name as the former haunt of a man-eating tiger who so terrorised the neighbourhood that finally a reward of Rs. 500 was offered for its destruction. The size of this reward tempted a Sikh shikari from up-country to make a bid for it; hearing that the man-eater was very partial to horse flesh, he purchased a *tatt* and drive it to and fro through the ghat. After one or two journeys the tiger pounced upon the *tatt* and began to drag it away into the undergrowth. The Sikh fired, dropped the tiger and ran towards it without stopping to reload. The beast, though severely wounded, determined to die hard and shattered the shikari's skull before it succumbed to his bullet. The ghat was thus freed of its terror, but it is said that the ghost of the shikari may still be seen driving his pony up and down the narrow pass at nightfall.

Motinala.—Motinala is a small village on the Bilaspur road, about 42 miles from Mandla and almost on the border of the district. It is the headquarters of a Forest Range Officer, and has a Public Works Department dâk-bungalow, and forest rest-house. Another rest-house has been built at Mauza Khudrai. The time has now gone by when buffalo used to visit the Phen Reserves, but nowadays the jungles here teem with tiger and deer of all kinds. Bison are frequently met with, especially about the beginning of the rains, and there is generally a fair number of bears in the neighbourhood. The village of Pakhnar, which lies within a few hundred yards of the North Phen Reserve, is a popular halting place for shikaris; Lord Kitchener paid it a visit in 1908 and anyone who wants a shot at a bison can hardly find a better spot.

Nainpur.—Nainpur is a large and rapidly increasing village with an area of 1562 acres. The population in 1891 was 493, in 1901 it had fallen to 434, and at the census of 1911 it had risen to as much as 3383, an increase of 679 per cent. in the ten years. The reason for this sudden increase is the advent of the narrow-gauge branch of the Bengal-Nagpur railway between Gondia and Jubbulpore. The Seoni, Chhindwara, and Mandla lines also branch off at Nainpur, which has been made the headquarters of the Railway Staff. Engine sheds have been constructed, bungalows and quarters are being built for the accommodation of railway officers and servants, and traders from Jubbulpore have erected one or two fine shops in the neighbourhood of the railway enclosure. The control of this enclosure is in the hands of a Station Committee, of which the Locomotive Engineer is now President. The Railway Company keeps up a dispensary to which all have access, and in 1911 more than 4000 persons were given medical assistance. An excellent dâk-bungalow has lately been built, and the place now contains a Police Station, a Mission School, a Sarai and Sub-Post Office. Water

unfortunately is very scarce. The District Council has lately sunk a well in the Nazulganj, and the Railway Company, who previously have had to bring all their water by rail from Seoni and other places, have this year constructed a great tank about a mile away from the station. The villages that lie in the catchment area will probably be bought up, and the tank used for a private water-supply as well as for the locomotives. The rapid increase in the village has recently made it necessary to introduce the mukaddam rules for sanitation. The assessment is about Rs. 250, out of which three sweepers are engaged.

Narainganj.—Narainganj is really a suburb of Padaria, the area of which is 815 acres. Narainganj itself has a population of 882 persons. It lies close to the Mandla-Jubbulpore road, 25 miles from Mandla, and contains a boys' school and a cattle-pound. The place derives its importance from being a kind of half-way house between Mandla and Jubbulpore, but the opening of the Mandla-Nainpur railway has affected it severely. Its population consists mostly of Banias, and from it many of the villages in the north-west of the Tahsil obtain their supplies. The landlord is Beohar Raghbir Singh, one of the largest landowners in the district. Although the surrounding country is very densely populated no medical relief has been obtainable nearer than Mandla in the past. This year (1912), however, a dispensary is to be built out of the local branch of the King Edward Memorial Fund.

Nerbudda River.—The Nerbudda River is the guardian deity of the district and among Indian rivers is second in sanctity only to the Ganges. On the forest-clad slopes of Amarkantak it issues from a tank begirt with shrines, and after a three miles' course touches British territory at the famous falls of Kapildhara. The stream flows north-west, marking the boundary between Mandla and Sohagpur, until after a winding course of fifty miles it turns sharply to the west towards the Tahsil town of Dindori. As soon as the Dindori plain is passed, it wanders through a tangled maze

of country, at one time cramped between lofty precipices, at another gliding gently through a fertile valley. About ten miles south-east of Niwas its course takes a sudden turn southward, flowing past Sid Baba and Ramnagar to Mandla town; thenceforward it flows north and west, keeping to the south of the Lakhanpur tract and leaving the district at Singai. Nowhere is the river navigable except for the ten mile reach between Ramnagar and the town of Mandla, and even timber-floating is difficult owing to numerous rapids and the large rocks that stud the stream. Just below Mandla are the much fabled Sahasradhara or Thousand Arm Rapids; the story goes that the male river, Sonbhadea, hearing of the surpassing beauty of the maiden Nerbudda, came to woo her. Warned of his approach the maiden took the form of a river and hastened in alarm from her mountain home of Amarkantak. A certain king, Kartik-Vriya of the Thousand Arms, heard the noise of her coming and tried to stop her with his thousand hands. But Nerbudda divided her current into a thousand streams and swept through his fingers at the place that is now known as Sahasradhara, or the Thousand Arm Rapid. At this point the river is nearly a mile in breadth, and with the boiling rapids above and the forest clad slopes below presents a view of really extraordinary beauty. The Hindus hold that the act of bathing in the sacred stream is sufficient to wash away all their sins, and vast numbers of holy men spend their lives moving up and down its banks. Of the tributaries of the Nerbudda the most important is the Banjar, which waters the fine sal jungles of the south and the rich rice tracts near Hirdenagar. The Halon and Burhner flow through the wild, undulating plains of Raigarh Bichchea, and after themselves uniting at Ghugri, fall into the Nerbudda, near the sacred spot known as Sid Baba or Deogaon.

Patparra.—Patparra is a ryotwari village, seven miles from Mandla on the Dindori road. The area is 705 acres,

and the population 485. The village is the head-quarters of the Church Missionary Society Mission to the Gonds, and contains a Boys' and Girls' School, in which the boys number 116 and the girls 47. The Mission keeps a hospital and dispensary, which in 1909 treated 1090, the following year 2093 and the following year 2051 patients. It also maintains an Orphanage, and a Leper Asylum, the number of lepers at present being sixteen. The Mission has two or three more institutions of the same kind at Marpha, Deori, and Diwari; the total number of boys and girls educated in the Mission schools of this district is 330.

Phen River.—See Motinala.

Pindrai.—Pindrai is a village of some importance as an industrial centre, situated on the Gondia-Jubbulpore railway. The area of the village is 1338 acres and its population in 1911 was 2160. The village derives its importance from its position in a rich and fertile plain on the Mandla border, and from a big cattle fair which is held two days a week. Cattle are sold for agricultural purposes as well as for slaughter, and some idea of the number disposed of during the year can be obtained from the Registration receipts, which at one anna per head in 1910-11 brought in Rs. 270 to the District Fund. Registration is quite voluntary, and represents only a fraction of the cattle sold. Another ordinary market is held on Saturdays, when a thriving trade is done, merchants coming from as far as Bombay to purchase wheat and hemp. The village has a Middle School for boys, a girls school, cattle-pound and post-office; an inspection bungalow is soon to be built on the rising ground overlooking the village across the railway line.

Ramgarh.—Ramgarh is a village of little modern importance in Dindori Tahsil. It was once the capital of the Rajah of those parts, whose estate was confiscated in the Mutiny. The origin of the family is of some interest. When Nizam Shah was Rajah of Mandla, two brothers, Mohansingh and Mukatman, and Mohansingh's son,

Gaji Singh, came from Garha in Jubbulpore, to offer their services to the king. The king was pleased to accept them, and Mohansingh and Mukatman were ordered to go out and kill a man-eating tiger in the forest of Bidi. For a long time they failed to find the tiger, and after some deliberation decided that one should stand beneath a tree as a "live kill," while the other sat above him with a gun. It fell to Mukatman's lot to take the more dangerous position; the tiger charged him, but Mohansingh fired from his *machān* and knocked it over. Thinking it was dead, Mukatman ran to look at it; but the tiger, who was only wounded, struck and killed him. Mohansingh then gave the tiger another bullet, which despatched it, and brought the bodies of his brother and the tiger back to the king. The Rajah, full of sorrow, made Mohansingh a general in his army as a consolation, and sent him out to repel some raiders from Bilaspur. On his return from a successful battle, a few fugitive soldiers of the enemy laid an ambush for him in a nallah, and shot him as he passed; the place where he fell is known as Mohannala to this day. In compensation for the loss of his father and uncle the Rajah gave Gaji Singh, the son of Mohansingh, the taluqa of Mukatpore; but the gift was of little value because the country side was tyrannised over by two Gond brothers, who, having a reputation for invulnerability, were able to extort vast sums of money from the countryfolk. After trying his strength against the two Gonds in fair fight, and failing to make any impression on them, Gaji Singh was forced to have recourse to less noble methods. He invited the whole household of his rivals to a dinner, set fire to the building, and killed them and their relations, all except one woman, who happening to be with child had stayed away from the function. She gave birth to a son, who in the fulness of time became Rajah of Imlai in Jubbulpore District. The story here becomes a little confused, but it appears that Gaji Singh, delighted with the

success of his ingenuity, went to Mandla, reported the matter to the Rajah, and was invested with the title of Rajah of Ramgarh. Rajah Bikramajit of Mutiny notoriety was his grandson; the latter had only been seated on his throne for a few days when he became mad, and his estate was taken in charge by the Court of Wards. The Rajah's wife, who had expected to have full control of the estate, was the prime cause in stirring up the revolt in that taluq, but after raising the flag of rebellion she had not the strength of character to meet the English forces at her rocky fort of Ramgarh, where she might have put up a long resistance, but evacuated on the approach of the enemy. Captain Waddington pursued her closely with his troops, until the queen, preferring death to capture, borrowed a sword from her one companion, and plunged it into her body. On her death-bed she stated that the country-people had been stirred to rebellion by herself, and were themselves free from blame. A free pardon to all the ryots was therefore proclaimed by beat of drum, but the estate was taken from the Rajah's heirs, Amansingh and Shersingh; that they might not be left destitute, the villages that rebelled were made to pay an additional 20 per cent. on the ordinary land revenue demand, which was given to them and their successors as a pension. This income is now known as the "*haqq parwarish.*"

Ramnagar.—Ramnagar is a large village of 1189 acres, 10 miles from Mandla on the south side of the river. The population, which in 1901 was 897, increased in the next decade to 1266. The village contained both a school and police-outpost, but the latter has now been done away with; it derives its importance chiefly from the old palace built by Hirde Shah, 250 years ago, when he transferred his capital from Garha in Jubbulpore District to Ramnagar. The palace is a massive, three-storied pile, quite devoid of architectural beauty; but the view from the windows atones for the dreadful ugliness of the building. In the words of Captain Ward "a more lovely site than that of the palace of

Ramnagar can hardly be imagined; the upper rooms command a magnificent view of the river Nerbudda, on whose bank the palace is situated just when the river makes an abrupt turn; and looking up the river, there is a long wide reach of water with high steep banks covered to the water's edge with lofty forest trees and clumps of the tall feathery kattang bamboo. The shadows of these and the shades of light reflected on their leaves, form ever-varying, and always lovely pictures". A stone tablet is imbedded in the castle wall at Ramnagar, on which is engraved the genealogical tree of the Garha-Mandla kings. It is however known to be inaccurate as regards the early history of the dynasty.

Reotha.—Reotha is a small village with an area of 432 acres south of Mandla. It is of some mythological interest inasmuch as the goddess Sita is said to have found her way here in the course of her second exile. Some Brahmans were fed on this spot by the goddess and it is the alleged birthplace of Lav and Kush.

Satpura Hills.—The Satpura Hills is the general term applied to the high-lying country, which stretches from Mandla and Balaghat districts to the Arabian Sea. In this district the Satpuras take the form of a series of plateaus gradually increasing in height towards the east until they terminate in the lofty Maikal Range and Amarkantak. The average elevation of the country is 2000 feet, but in places the hills rise to 3500, and outside the district to over 4000 feet in height. The plateau forms the watershed between the Nerbudda on the north and the great rivers of the south. The country has been described as an elevated plateau, in some parts merely a rugged mass of hills hurled together by volcanic action, in others a succession of bare stony ridges and narrow fertile valleys, in which the soil has been deposited by drainage. In this district the Satpuras contain two important Forest Ranges, the Banjar and the Jagmandal. The Banjar river rises in

the Baihar Tahsil of Balaghat and flows north towards Mandla town, passing through the magnificent Sal forests of the Range, to which it gives its name. The Banjar hills teem with game of all kinds, sambhur, barasinga, carnivora and the much-sought bison. Jagmandal Range is less prolific, but occasionally bison are to be met as well as deer.

Shahpura.—Shahpura with an area of 4,282 acres is the largest village in Dindori Tahsil. In 1901 the population numbered 2224 but by 1911 it had risen to 2682. The village lies in a small plain on the main road between Dindori and Jubbulpore and is inhabited chiefly by Telis and Ahirs. The malguzar is Shahzat Singh, a member of the house of the Ramgarh Rajah, whose estate was confiscated in the Mutiny. Shahzat Singh now possesses 60 villages and receives "*haqq parwarish*" on a number of the confiscated villages of his uncle. Shahpura itself is notorious as being one of the most insanitary villages in the district, which, coupled with the fact that the wells do not hold water in the hot weather, make it a most undesirable spot to visit in that season of the year. The Mukaddam rules, however, are about to be introduced, and the place may, in course of time, become more habitable. It contains an Inspection bungalow, a police-station, a Vernacular Middle School and a Girls' School. A dispensary has also been built, which has accommodation for four indoor patients. In the year 1909 the number of patients, who received medical assistance, was 4578, the following year 4346, and the following year 4271. The average cost of maintenance for each year was Rs. 1000. Shahpura is a trade centre of some importance, as it buys great quantities of harra (myrabolam) and wheat from outlying villages and despatches them along the Kundum road to Jubbulpore. It is however impossible to make any accurate estimate of the produce that is thus disposed of, as no records are kept.

Simaria.—Simaria is a sparsely populated village of just over 700 acres in the heart of the Jagmandal Forest, eight

miles from Anjania, which is twelve miles from Mandla on the Bilaspur road. The village contains an Inspection bungalow, chiefly used by shooting parties. The surrounding forests abound with game of all kinds, including a few bison, and the Baigas are particularly skilled, being supposed to know the lying-up places of every species. They do not however betray their knowledge on every occasion.

Singharpur.—Singharpur is a village of 1000 acres about 18 miles north-west of Mandla on the Nerbudda. A low hill is said to have once been the *ashram* or abode of a certain Shingeri Rishi, who underwent a great penance in the depths of the neighbouring forest. The people of the locality worship his memory, and still point to marks on the hillsides which are said to be traces of the fires used by the recluse during his penance.

Sobhapur.—Sobhapur is a sparsely populated village in Dindori Tahsil with an area of 2500 acres. It claims to be the scene of a miracle. In the middle of the Nerbudda close to the village there is a cistern or clean cut hole in a rock, three or four cubits deep and perfectly circular, and the story goes that the rock was once quite solid, but one day an image of Mahadeo suddenly took form, and rose from out of the rock, leaving the circular hole to bear witness to the fact. The "cistern" must certainly have been due to some natural cause, probably the action of the water, like the many "devil's punch bowls" of the Devon and Cornish Coasts.

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